

PHANTASMS

Handwritten: Lucia Collier. Hudson

WIRT GERRARE



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PHANTASMS

ORIGINAL STORIES

By WIRT GERRARE

Posthumous Personality and Character

WIRT GERRARE

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INTRODUCTION

Posthumous Personality and Character

HORACE VESEY left Corby during my first term in the lower school. I therefore knew little of him personally. True, his doings as a fifth-form boy were fresh in the memories of my schoolmates, and I remembered a few of them which had passed into the traditional lore of the school. When a young and hard-pressed journalist, I presumed on this acquaintance to interview Vesey on the subject of "Spiritualism." I hoped to get specially interesting information; for no one in London was credited with so complete a knowledge of the mystic cults, which at that time were again attracting general attention.

From the journalistic standpoint the interview was not a success—I remember that my "copy" was pigeon-holed and forgotten—but I benefited to the extent of gaining a friend and an intimate

association with the most remarkable personality it has been my fortune to meet.

"We were at Corby together, you say, Gerrare; but you must have been learning genders at the time I was on Sallust. What do you remember of me?"

"That you walked in your sleep, and threw the hammer fully ten feet further than Alec Grove."

He laughed. "The first needs explanation, the second does not, I suppose."

The former was the easier to believe. It seemed to me incomprehensible that the slight, slack, sinewless frame of the sleep-walker had been capable of achieving such success over the skilled and muscular Alec. "It is of spiritualism I wish to talk with you."

"But the general public cannot understand spiritualism. It is as useless to attempt an explanation of spirit-life to materialists, as to expound the Differential Calculus to ignorant Papuans."

"The interpreter only is wanting."

"A right conception of the mystery of being is necessary to a comprehension of posthumous existence, and this conception is lacking."

“Is not that because scientists will not use the common language of the people?”

“No; for learning is not wisdom. Our conception of a thigh-bone is not altered when we learn to call it a femur, nor have we advanced in knowledge when we term a lapse of memory *ecmnesia*. Much of the labour of eminent men is thrown away, because resulting only in the discovery of new names for well-known things, or is misspent in search of correct definitions for long-ascertained processes. Wisdom rather is possessed by those who have not lost their perception of facts, in attempting to represent the relation of them by symbols.”

“I want facts.”

He smiled. A gleam as of humour flashed into his wondrous dreamy eyes; but they almost immediately reassumed their habitual faraway look—a look which I have never seen in other eyes, and which I can only describe as being a soft, intelligent gaze into the unknown. “I am not a fact-monger,” he said quietly. “You must go to the schoolmen if you wish to hear someone who can talk glibly of *telakousia*, *aponeurosis*, *dynamogeny*, and other things which are under-

standable, capable even of being demonstrated, and adequately, if not accurately, described with the aid of special vocables culled from the choicer teratology of the textbooks. I am an idealist whose ideas have been proved by experience. I cannot convey my ideas to you, because they are known to me only as what they *are*, not by symbols; and if I coined names, or made symbols, neither you nor anyone else would understand them, nor could I explain them—there is the difficulty.”

“It is not insurmountable.”

“Yes and no. I can suggest certain things to you, as I have to others. I can suggest that you believe them as being realities, *as they are*; but what does that amount to? No more than that you have been hypnotised, and experienced what some term hallucinations; others, less learned, delusions. If you perchance alight on the right path without direction, you are believed to have evolved the ideas out of your inner consciousness, told that your experiences are self-suggested phantasms, not real discoveries of fact.”

“The general public dislikes anyone to be greatly ahead of it in knowledge.”

“The limit of human knowledge is not where public opinion places it, nor as it is determined by exponents of the physical sciences; it rests solely with the individual. In the first place, you must distinguish between the knowledge of the individual and the knowledge of the whole mass of individuals. For instance, I may not know what one John Jones in California and another in New South Wales know at this moment; but there is a state some persons attain, in which it is possible to ascertain what any and every person living knows—that is comparatively easy. Beyond there is a state in which it is possible to ascertain more, but to translate it is impossible.”

“Because no one can comprehend the translation?”

“Quite so. The individual cannot understand that of which he has no experience, as in the material world we know not the feel of iron or stone until we have touched something harder than a feather pillow; so our unutilised senses need experience if we are to comprehend the non-material world, whilst even to perceive the facts of this, our ordinary senses are barely sufficient.”

“Some people are supposed to possess a sixth sense.”

“There is really but one sense. Man’s so-called five senses are but variations of the same mechanism suited to receive material impressions of different kinds, and communicate the result of each *indentation* to the brain; for all are operated in the same manner—by contact. You know the physiological processes; for instance, the sense of touch, the most limited in range of the five senses, arises from the membrane that first receives the *impression* of the object in contact, setting up a certain vibration in the nerve which connects it with the brain. The impression reaches the brain as a sensation, the interpretation of which is dependent upon the memory of past experiences of like similar, or dissimilar, sensations produced by the same nerve, or one of the same order. The quality of touch varies in different parts of the body. If two needle points placed only one twenty-fifth part of an inch apart be applied to the tip of the tongue, they will be felt as *two* points. If they are placed even four times the distance apart, and applied to the back, they will be felt as a single point only. Taste and smell

are closely allied to touch, the sensations being excited by the impinging of extremely minute particles of matter upon appropriate nerves. Hearing is the sensation caused by certain vibrations of the atmospheric ether, in contact with the tympanum of the ear. Sight the result of certain movements of the optic nerve, caused by the impression of a picture upon the retina."

"Just so; but I came to hear you talk of life after death, about elementary spirits, ghosts, goblins, and the like."

"Including objective and subjective apparitions; therefore I point out to you particularly the acknowledged fact that we never see an object, only the reflection in miniature of one, as it is depicted upon a membrane *within* the eye by the rays of light; that is, by contact with waves of atmospheric ether in rapid motion, for light as you know is but a mode of movement. Red waves result from impulses at a speed of 392 billions a second, and violet, at the other extremity of the solar spectrum, by impulses at a speed of 757 billions a second. Vibrations above the violet and below the red do not excite luminous sensations."

“Then above the violet is spirit land?”

“The scientist says simply that there is chemical activity.”

“And below the red?”

“Heat—until we descend to the very low figure of say 35,000 a second, when vibrations are perceived as sound.”

“What is the usual difference in the sensory capabilities of individuals?”

“Too slight to affect the main issue. Some people cannot hear the squeal of a bat; and it may be presumed that should a bat squeal within the hearing of seven people, yet only one hear it, an examination of the witnesses would establish in an overwhelming fashion that the bat did not then squeal: thus if one sees a ghost, and a dozen people having equal opportunities ought to see it but do not, then there was no appearance of a ghost—the senses of the man who saw it must have deceived him, he is left doubting, too often is over-persuaded, and believes the contrary of the actual fact. Of course, all the senses may be deceived; the sensation which ordinarily results from touching a steel point with the tip of the finger may arise from anything *inside* the body

which will produce a like movement of the nerve connecting the finger tip with the brain. The stimulation of any sense nerve to action results in the delivery of a sensation to the conscious self; its interpretation, as a false message or as a genuine impression, will depend upon the past experience of the recipient. When one knows that one's optic nerve is unable to convey accurately different sensations for impressions of red and green, one learns to distrust that sensation; in like manner when one hears strange noises, unheard by others, one distrusts one's hearing, and believes one's self to be the subject of hallucinations. On the other hand the value of each of the senses increases as memories of past experiences of its use accumulate."

"Apparently the evidence of one sense is supported, or is contradicted, by that of another?"

"Yes, but the accumulations of past experiences prove how close is the association of one sense with another; upon hearing the word 'vinegar' there comes a sensation as of sour taste; this association of sensation with words helps the mesmeriser towards the mental realisation of the suggestion he makes. The transference of sensa-

tion from person to person without the ordinary perceptible suggestion, has been done, accomplished under test conditions. Apparently all perception must be by means of motion. What movement then is that, by which one person in one room is mentally directed by another person in another room at a distance to taste coffee, and the coffee so hot as to scald?"

"Thought transference is done simply by an effort of will?"

"Then no doubt the effort puts into wave-motion particles of ethic substance which reach the other person and produce the sensation desired. Could we see that mode of motion we know to exist at higher velocities than 760 billion vibrations a second, or hear sound waves travelling at a higher pitch than 35,000 vibrations a second, possibly we might either see or hear the process by which thought-transference is effected."

"We shall not do that unless the sixth sense is developed; yet we can neither see nor hear magnetic force and have nevertheless been able to make much use of it, and scientists think they fairly comprehend it now."

"Just as we have been able to use electricity to

enable us hear and see things our senses *can* perceive, so can thought-transference be utilised. Thought-transference also explains the kindred phenomena of clairvoyance; for clairvoyance is merely a change to the other end of the connecting-line. The percipient of a sensation, the one who receives a thought-message, *knows* that a similar sensation is experienced by the person who communicates. The person who wills conjures up a vision of a luminous cross, or actually beholds one; the person who receives the thought-message or impression, knows that the sender is regarding a cross; what one sees the other sees; clairvoyance therefore is but a variety of thought-transference, or, more accurately, telepathy."

"Such communications are surely limited," I ventured.

"Limitations of this kind; if the person who wishes to transmit the impression knows neither the taste nor the appearance of, say, olives, and determines to transmit the sensation of taste of them to a person who does know it, the nerves of the sense of taste would not be directly acted upon by the will of the transmitter, but the sense of hearing or of sight would be directed to the

word 'olives,' and by a reflex action and the association of ideas, the taste of olives would become apparent to the percipient. If neither the person who wills, that is the transmitter, nor the person who perceives, that is recipient, knows anything of olives, although a knowledge of the name-word may be conveyed, it will be as powerless to produce the flavour of olives as though the word 'Methusela' had been communicated. If, however, the transmitter likes olives, and the percipient does not, the taste communicated, although recognised, will be agreeable to the percipient."

"Then thought or sensation-transference proves that the external organs of sense do not need to be appealed to directly, in order to produce exactly similar sensations to those which follow an actual appeal to the senses in the ordinary way?"

"If such proof were needed. Of more importance is the fact that through thought-transference and clairvoyance many get a glimpse of a world of activities imperceptible to man's external organs of sense; an indication of the manner in which it is the easiest for a being not

possessing man's organs of speech or material body to communicate with him."

"Then you acknowledge that apparitions, ghosts, are subjective, not objective? That they are in fact illusions?"

"Consider the matter in a commonsense manner. Assume that a phantom of the dead wishes to appear to the living, in order to accomplish some set purpose, will not the phantom adopt the method easiest for it? The simplest and most direct means are usually the best, and if the phantom had to simultaneously attract the attention of a blind man and a deaf one it would be useless to 'appear' in winding-sheet and with clinking of chain; it would be easier to appeal to the sense of touch."

"Do you give ghosts credit for ability to touch?"

"Say rather ability to make themselves felt. The hypnotiser can suggest to the subject that he is blistered, and a real actual blister, leaving a real, unmistakable scar, is produced wholly by the effect of the suggestion on the hypnotised subject. When, therefore, the ghost of Lord Tyrone appeared to Lady Beresford, and made an indelible scar upon her wrist, it is not necessary

to suppose that it was really burned, or that the phantom had the power of touch."

"But how about the impress burnt into the cabinet?"

"The evidence for that is not so good; nor are we considering the power of phantoms to act upon inorganic matter. That they may do so is, I think, the logical inference from the proven fact that they act upon organic matter."

"In order to do so phantoms must materialise, and their ability to do even this has, I believe, never been proved under test conditions."

"It is amusing how some of those who laugh at every phase of spiritualism, express their willingness to be convinced if spirits will manifest under test conditions which *they* will impose. They admit that they know nothing of spirits, nor of the laws by which they are governed, and so the test conditions are often extremely ridiculous. It is as though when one proposed to make ice-cream for the delectation of an African potentate, he refused to believe in the solidification of the confection unless it should remain frozen as solid after an exposure of an hour or two to a tropical sun. You propose to show a sceptic a spirit. He

will not believe it to be a spirit until it shall have materialised. When materialised he will even declare that it, being matter, cannot be spirit, and will attribute its appearance and disappearance to trickery—probably complimenting you upon having so successfully deluded his perceptions. It is thankless work.”

“Does not much of the opposition to spiritualism arise from the trivial nature of spiritualistic phenomena?”

“Arises rather from a misconception of the character of spirit life. The idea that human beings as soon as dead become as omniscient as angels are popularly supposed to be, is not based upon commonsense, and is fallacious. Man immediately after death is neither more nor less than the entity he was—minus the body and the power of communicating through it with the material world. He has precisely the same intelligence and character, the same knowledge, and he has to discern his universe from a fresh point of view. Whatever he may learn in this new environment he will never be able to communicate to men in the flesh, unless they are such facts or experiences as by learning or research he had some conception

of when in the body. The talk of a spiritualist medium who is controlled, or fancies himself controlled, by a bricklayer is such as one expects from a man of the labouring class. It is in the fitness of things that such should be so. Whatever was beyond his knowledge as a bricklayer will be still unknown so far as informing a medium is concerned; and this, not because new knowledge is unobtainable by a spirit, but because it is acquired by a method, the manner of expressing which was unknown to him prior to his post-humous existence."

"There is then little hope of learning from spirits?"

"So far as the ordinary manifestations go the teaching is that suited to the needs and capabilities of the learners. As far as my experience goes, nothing very new, very startling, or radically different to preconceived and generally accepted ideas, need ever be expected from them."

"Matter passing through matter, for instance?"

"Matter is always passing through matter in the same way as a fish through water, or the earth through a comet's tail. Solidity is only relative;

the comet which occupies millions of cubic miles would, if its particles were as closely packed as those of gold, form a tiny lump small enough to place in the pocket of one's waistcoat. Even then *some* space would be left between the atoms composing it. The radiometer, as you know, reveals the fact that matter may be reduced to particles so small, that in comparison with the smallest of those observable with the most powerful microscope they are in size as a pistol-bullet to the earth. Solid matter passes through solid wire, as you may demonstrate with a water-battery by placing the one pole in a solution of various salts and the other in a separate vessel in a bit of moist sand; the salt crystals will be found in the sand-heap, separately deposited, those of dissimilar character apart."

"But that does not show how a book passes through a brick wall."

"It illustrates the working of a force, and the force which controls lifeless matter is known to physical science solely by the result of its operation. For instance, it has never been explained why and how steel is attracted to the magnet. If instead of comprehending force as a

property of matter, you ascertain the nature of the activities by which matter is conditioned, the passage of matter through matter in the sense you mean will no longer appear impossible, and you will be as little inclined as I am to witness irregular physical manifestations of force."

"You regard them as pertaining to black magic?"

"I simply do not desire them. I know that man does not end at the finger-tips, and is able to influence matter at a distance from his body. There is a radiation from each soul-centre which receives sympathetic response from other centres—from the soul of things. The sun as an entity terminates many millions of miles from this earth; the sun as a force reaches here and obtains that physical response known as heat and light—two forms of motion—of life."

"But table-turning, rapping, and supposed communications with the spirits of the dead do not seem to impart much knowledge."

"Simply the knowledge fitted to the understanding and desires of the circle. If the search is for truth, so much truth as the seekers can comprehend; if the 'circle' is frivolous, then the

desired quantity of frivolity. The wholly curious are most often disappointed."

"And the indifferent multitude truth does not attract?"

"Is not so large as you imagine; for the truth is known by many names. I receive communications from all sorts and conditions of people. Some of these abuse spiritualism, yet give particular instances which are further evidence of its working. The chief effect these communications have is to convince me that truth must be taught by parable."

"Because spiritualism is not to be scientifically demonstrated?"

"The scientific spirit of the age is materialistic. When matter has been ascertained, if not before, the spirit underlying matter will be sought and found. Now, as always, there are many for whom the study of matter is insufficient, and them I serve. If you wish to know more of magic, come here whenever you choose, and in time, in lieu of talking elementary physics, we will speak of matters the multitude cannot understand."

From that day my visits were frequent. Vesey had no inclination to symbolic mysticism; his

room was an ordinary, comfortably-furnished apartment; quiet, lofty, roomy, light, and as home-like as the cosy corner of the cultured bachelor can be made to be. It was if anything too modern; too orderly; too business-like; his books, other than one in immediate use, were stored away in closed presses; there was no statuary, few ornaments, and the pictures were bright, cheerful, and common-place; the most noticeable, and most used, piece of furniture was a large Persian divan, on which every day Vesey, reclining at ease, spent hours in dreaming those untranslatable visions, which were to him the very essence of being. "Be at ease, be comfortable, and let no one disturb you," he counselled, "if you wish to attain a conception of the higher life; my people guard the door, and, as *you* know, will allow no one to enter nor themselves intrude; as I lie here at perfect ease, my *narghileh* induces that trance condition I wish, and my universe unfolds to my view."

The only peculiarity I noticed was the always burning wood-fire on the open hearth, so constantly replenished that the heat of the room was never less than 65° and often 10° higher.

My first experience of Vesey's mystic world was one dull November afternoon; a thick fog had turned to rain, and his cheerful fireside was an oasis in London wretchedness. I was at my ease in smoking jacket and soft buckskin slippers, *my* roomy arm-chair was in the very front of the fire; Vesey was in his happiest mood, and the conversation which had been brisk became desultory, and the silence often broken only by the bubbling of the *narghileh*, as Vesey drew furtively from the sinuous pipe which reached him as he lay stretched inelegantly on his divan.

It was of course a dream, but very different to any previously experienced. In the first place, I appeared to be gazing at a large screen of a brownish drab colour. Suddenly I noticed that in the centre there was something bright; no sooner had it attracted my attention than it instantly burst into a scintillating blaze of colour, of a colour which was new to me, for into its composition neither red nor yellow nor blue entered; it had no suggestion of any of the secondary or tertiary hues, and as I looked into its magnificent depth, enraptured with its beauty, it seemed to centralise and be set against a background of

fiery opal, with every varying tint of which this new colour contrasted sharply; as I looked a broad black bar appeared across the upper half, a white one across the lower, both shewing with equal distinctness; then, as my gaze faded, I saw this new colour showing dimly through the jet black of the streak across the upper half, whilst the portion covered with the diaphanous white band remained totally hidden.

I opened my eyes. Vesey was sitting upright on the divan, an amused expression on his face. "What have you seen?" he asked.

"A new colour," I replied.

"Can you describe it?"

"I think so."

"Well?"

I remained silent.

"Come! Speak! Was it transparent or fuliginous? Opalescent or phosphorescent? Aplanatic or atramentous? Glaucous, xanthous, or gridelin? Or perhaps murrey, lateritious, or cymophanous?"

"Don't! I will write out the description."

"You may spare yourself the worry; remember I have been a journalist, and the attempt to describe a new colour will only cause you to curse

the cecity and ablepsy of an excecated generation. Yet, if language cannot convey even an idea of a mild exaltation of the colour sense, is it surprising that man remains etiolate? Probably you and I are the only persons living who have seen the colour; now tell me what colour was it?"

I understood his humour. "I must see it again," I replied.

"Are you at my end of the spectrum? Am I likely to have a companion in my investigations, or are you with so many modern mystics at the other?"

"What separates the two? Is not the whole field of the unknown one?"

"In the appreciation of colour the difference is only some 350 billion vibrations the second, in the speed of light waves—but that means the whole of the universe as measured by man's senses."

On another excursion into the unknown, I appeared to be viewing a world in which this new colour entered largely, and I saw moving about in it strange shapes, most of them of the more delicate shades of pink and heliotrope, but some

fulvous, others pearly, all diaphanous; occasionally two or more apparently united for an instant, and a vivid flash of yet another colour new to me was produced, which, glowing intensely, seemed to burn itself out with wondrous refulgence, and change into a mass of iridescent syenite.

My descriptions of such visions did not appear to afford any information to Vesey, who exhorted me to idealise differently and "create new thoughts." One day, when urging me into his field of ideal speculation, I told him that it lacked variety; this he attributed to the extraordinary development of my colour sense. "It has the sameness of *Dante's Paradiso*," I complained.

"The sameness of Paradise! It is only the 'Inferno' that lacks variety. Have you no better conception of future existence? Do you not know that heaven is Kalpa-Taroo, a tree of the imagination from which everyone gathers the fruit he expects? How otherwise could the heavens of true believers harmonise? The picture of Paradise drawn by and for the gold-keeping, jewel-worshipping, music-loving Jew is not satisfying even to the modern cultured orthodox

Christian, who rightly regards the Biblical description as symbolic; for some it has no attraction, others it actively repels. Yet every man will find the heaven or hell he expects; the Jew his golden Jerusalem, the Hindu his Nirvana, the Pagan his Olympus, the warrior his Valhalla, and the poor savage his happy hunting ground, for in the future state the ideals of this are realised."

"Then the good Catholic his thousand or more years of purgatory, and some eternal fire."

"The thousand or more years certainly, according to the believer's conception of a thousand years, but not for ever; because no one who can conceive eternity believes he merits everlasting punishment."

"Then the suffering is measured, not by the enormity of the evil wrought, but by the wrongdoer's conception of the punishment due?"

"Exactly."

"A belief in such injustice would add a new terror to death!"

"Is it wrong to give a man what he conceives to be his just reward? In physical life do not the sick, the weakly, the incompetent, suffer more than

the strong, the healthy, the successful? Are not misfortunes invariably accompanied with compensations? Do you believe in the eternal fitness of things? You, my friend, are gravitating to the wrong end of the spectrum, instead of seeing in future existence an extended sphere of activity, greater knowledge, fresh powers, new desires, illimitable life, increasing variety; you would confine yourself to an enlarged memory of the past, to live again and again the existences you have had, and renew the dreadful experiences of your slow development to your present not very enjoyable state of being!"

"Is such my destiny?"

"Not if you will have it otherwise."

"And you, Vesey, what do you conceive to be your ultimate state?"

"Not Nirvana! At present I feel drawn towards the sun; I could luxuriate in its fierce warmth, gain new strength from its intense energy. Thence, ever onward, in illimitable, infinite space—there is ever room!"

"It is useless for me to attempt your idealisations; I must be useful at the other end of the spectrum."

“With no other ambition than to become a dead, joyless, unenlightened, motionless moon!”

Here I may observe that these ideas were not speculative abstractions; to Vesey they were real, living, almost tangible, realities.

From that time he endeavoured to make his views more pleasing, and was assiduous in directing my attention to objects which had no attraction for me, and of which I could not understand the significance. One day when we had been comparing the houri-haunted paradise of the Moslem with that heaven in which there is “no marriage,” he remarked that sex was but an accident, just as “in a future state some of the beings cannot hide a fact in their past history, whilst others are perfectly inscrutable both as to the past and the present, and the attraction of each kind to the other far surpasses in intensity any phase of mundane passion.”

Soon it became evident to Vesey that he and I were attracted to mysticism from different poles; the only thing we both held in common was a dislike of symbolism and detestation of ritual. When Vesey found that I was, to use his term, “at the other end of the spectrum,” he helped me

to a better understanding of mysticism in its nearer relations to human life. We used to study together some of the problems which were submitted to him for advice; we would seek out cases of extraordinary psychical experiences, analyse, and comment upon them; for a time he took an interest in this work, and even annotated a number of other people's experiences upon his own initiative, but this was not so interesting as the speculative mysticism which grew to a master passion and occupied him night and day. I suggested that he should write a theory of apparitions; some fragments only, scrawled upon the margin of theses drawn up by myself and submitted for his consideration, are all he wrote. From them it appears that he held that man after death has "other concerns than those which occupied his attention during life on earth; the phantom or apparition is usually but a thought-picture deeply impressed upon the ever-living memory, and observable by those in whose nature there is a sufficiently responsive chord in active sympathy with that which sustained, received, the original impression."

"Periodically or irregularly recurrent appari-

tions are usually produced by the individual after death, recalling to memory the experience of a certain fact of earth life; when, for instance, a wrong done is deeply felt and rankles in the soul of the sufferer, the remembrance of the injury surges up into the memory during post-humous life, and is dwelt upon with such intensity of feeling that the thought is observable by men in the flesh."

"The malignant phantom possessing a hatred of certain natures, objects, or localities is sometimes unable to follow the attractions of the newer life it has entered upon, and haunts those places or people, and is observable; in time this perversion succumbs to other impulses, and if the apparitions do not wholly cease, they at least become harmless and occur at irregular intervals and without malicious intent."

"Minor material disturbances, instead of being attributed to elementary spirits, should be traced to irregular action of earth-force, an energy closely allied in its nature to that which causes volcanic, seismic, and electric disturbances, and at times escapes from the throbbing and over-fatigued creature which we call the earth."

“The apparitions of phantoms of living persons, although less frequently perceived than the phantoms of the dead, and attracting less attention, really deserve closer study at this time, for they prove that man is more than mere flesh and nerve, and they indicate his intimacy with the intelligent cosmos, or world force; in like manner, from their rarity and the seemingly trivial circumstances which induce them, we comprehend better the like action of the posthumous phantom. It should also be remembered that man after death, possessing already a full knowledge of earth life, is not prompted by curiosity to live its details over again—thus spirit manifestation is often as accidental, both with regard to the cause and the apperception and the coincidence of observation, as is the ascertained apparition of a phantasm of a living person.”

Here I may explain that Vesey believed all occurrences were purposely brought about by world-force or the intelligent cosmos; to him the word accidental had a different significance to that commonly assigned it, but in this instance he appears to use it in the ordinary sense. Apparently the most trivial occurrences would

attract him, because he perceived their psychical significance.

“Coincidence,” he remarked to me one day, “has convinced more people of the existence of Providence than have all the miracles. It is the seeming miracle brought about in a natural manner which touches the soul-sense, and influences for good a man who would be only bewildered by seeing a revised edition of the Bible passing through a solid brick wall. You know the case of the mill foreman who wore a pocketless suit, and one day so far transgressed the factory rules as to secrete a penknife about him ; he could never explain why he was impelled to do so ; he had never done it before ; he has never done it since ; but that day he did it ; and because he had the knife was able to save the life of his master, whose neckerchief or ‘comforter’ had accidentally engaged with a fast rotating shaft, and hoisted the wearer to the ceiling. It appeared to *them* a direct interposition of Providence, and in like instances is almost always so regarded ; often as a direct answer to prayer for preservation. Of course, answered prayers are much too frequent to be the result of accidental

coincidence: it is rare indeed that a request for a psychical favour is not accorded, and this is a further indication that a closer knowledge of the intelligent cosmos is not denied to those who desire it; a guardian angel, a mentor, or an actual spiritual adviser is at the call of everyone, but as the manner of working is incomprehensible to many, I will explain it by assuming the case of an orthodox theologian who feels an overpowering impulse to read any particular book, from Volney's *Ruins of Empires* to *Robert Elsmere*. He believes that the impulse is the instigation of the devil to an act designed to tempt him from his belief; the temptation to read is always before him, his power to resist becomes weaker and weaker; he prays that the temptation may be removed, or that he may have power to resist it. The next time the book is before him, open perhaps, he is about just to glance at its contents, when instantly there is a message, 'If you read you will become blind.' The dread of physical misfortune kills the desire; he is saved from the temptation; his faith is strengthened. There are messages which command and impel one to do directly the opposite to what one has fully determined to do. When

one's will is subordinated to an impulse to the commission of an act at variance with reason, previous experience, and intention, the impulse is followed, and if a catastrophe is thereby avoided, the person warned and saved is blindly grateful to the spirit guide and becomes superstitious."

After what I have reported of my first conversation with Vesey, it seems hardly necessary to give his view of the manner in which the phantoms make themselves known: that they do not usually materialise in order to be observed, but act directly upon the sense nerve, or brain, awaken the memory of themselves in order to be at once recognised, and influence rather than compel action. "Our waking thoughts, our sleeping memories, the records of the whole of our past experiences are available to the phantom, just as fully as is the actual mechanism by which we are actuated, and as the phantom knows that the idea of a stone wall obstructing our progress is quite as effective to change our path as the actual obstacle would be, he creates the idea as being less troublesome than producing real masonry."

"The fact that the phantom acts upon a higher plane than the material one should increase the

dread we have of its interference rather than lessen the awe with which we regard it, for it is much easier to combat earthworks, of which our senses have cognizance, than struggle against the psychical wrongs done by malicious beings working on a plane where the mischief wrought is known to us only by the disastrous results to our psychical and material well-being."

"The worst natural phantoms are those of persons whose earthly life is cut short before naturally developed; particularly of those evilly inclined, who are killed whilst attempting some wicked act, and powerfully animated by lust or passion."

"The worst unnatural phantoms are those of persons who, during earth life, have been able to attract to themselves some of the world-force, or energy, without intelligence."

"Not one, nor a dozen, but legion," complained Vesey, "for they are possessed of that lowest of all attributes, the faculty of uniting; of taking common action against the separate individual, just like fellows of a Society, or subscribers to a Trade's Union. Pah! blinded by their own greed they do not see that every work in creation points

to the evolution of the individual, so they linger, hindering all, and missing every chance of development."

The stories which reached us, the experiences we ourselves had, and the cases in which Vesey was consulted were, Vesey declared, nearly all concerned with the work of the evil-disposed phantoms; the recountal of them could serve no useful purpose, and the selection I have made is of those cases in which the higher principle is not wholly obscured.

Three stories, however, do not properly come within this classification; one, "A New Force," appears to me to warrant insertion, as illustrating a possible achievement on the material plane; the other, "The Face of Nature," is a narrative of Vesey's, which in my opinion forecasts the direction of some of his later experiments; it was with others in a parcel of MSS. handed to me after his death, which took place suddenly, and was attributed to failure of the heart's action, though readers of the story may find indications of a more recondite cause. The story of Robert has been still more recently notified to me, and is introduced because the phantom has points which

differentiate it from others of the astral type, and, although the manifestations appear to have been motiveless, this publication of the particulars, together with the capital portrait of the phantom, drawn from memory by the artist to whom he appeared, may be a means to the identification of the person, and lead to the elucidation of the mystery connected with its periodical reappearance.

The Dark Shadow.

IN November, 1888, I was ordered to relieve Nurse Rose at Bracknal House, Ebery, where she had been her full term of six weeks. It was a hopeless case, and I had of late had so many that I felt disheartened, and was so dismayed at the cheerless aspect of the deserted, straggling village, and more particularly of the lonely house on its outskirts, that I was inclined to sacrifice my career and return forthwith to Kyrwick with Nurse Rose: many times since I have wished that I had done so. Nurse Rose was not long in getting away; a farmer drove her to the station. I watched the spring-cart as long as it was in sight, then shut the heavy iron gate in the old high wall, and burst out crying. I walked slowly up the weedy path through the neglected and desolate garden, with its dark gloomy evergreens and leafless old trees. It was already becoming dark, and I saw, or thought I saw, something like a human figure, dimly discernible,

crouching behind some overgrown and gnarled espaliers at the far end of the garden. I hastened to the front door, which I had left ajar; but it closed with a bang before I reached it, and no sooner had the echo it produced died out than I heard an ominous chuckle; it seemed close at my side. There was nothing for it but to make my way round by the espaliers to the other door, and this I did with face averted and as fast as my legs could take me. The little village girl, our sole establishment, was astonished to see me out of breath and sobbing in her kitchen; my manner frightened her, and she never got over her aversion, which was unfortunate, for she and her mother, who came once or twice to char, were the only people to speak to.

My unfortunate patient, however, required constant care. Poor woman, I hardly knew how to take her at first; she was so importunate, so querulous, so insistent upon constant and immediate attention, that I thought she would weary me to death; but I found that it was because she was afraid to be alone, and not that she had determined to have the full value of her money in service, as it is the manner of some coarse

natures to exact. For fifty years she had lived alone and uncared for in that dreary village, unloving and unloved; there appeared to be no relative to solace her age, or comfort her dying moments with sympathy. To the doctor also she was almost a stranger, and although she suffered from a wondrous number of diseases, not one had the merit of being uncommon or interesting. Chronic bronchitis, with dropsy, a sphacelitic limb and senile atrophy, are merely troublesome and hopeless.

It was indeed a dreadful time. The close, stuffy sick-room with bronchitis-kettle always steaming, and the air reeking of iodoform, nauseous compounds, and the ever-prevailing odour of death; the huge four-post bedstead and its heavy curtains; the heavy, well-polished press; the equally substantial and inelegant chest-upon-chest; the dirty and foxed engravings in their worm-eaten frames; the badly-polished bare floor and rush-bottomed, cruelly angular, and impossible chairs; these and other reminders of that age when people regarded hardship, torture, and agony as daily necessities, all added to the prevailing gloom—a gloom which was not enlivened by such glimpses of day as

one obtained through the small latticed window, o'ershadowed by the huge arms of an elm from which the vigour of youth had long since departed.

Then the doctor, a grumpy, dried-up, ill-at-ease old bachelor, whom nothing could please, barely noticed me—I suppose I have Nurse Rose to thank for *that*—and had nothing to say to his patient. Then the mild-faced, soulless curate, who was a sort of hereditary incumbent, nephew to a vicar who invariably wintered in the South and passed the summer in Scotland. The charwoman, Kate's mother, a grasping, cruel, bargain-driving peasant woman, and a young, very boorish, taciturn farmer, who drove me back to the station at Soltun-in-the-Marsh, were the only other persons to whom I spoke except the village lawyer, Mr. Shum. He came but once, ostensibly to see Mrs. Bailey, and assure me that the nursing-fee would be paid; really I think to see *me*; for he asked me to visit him at Frog Hall—what a name for a house!—on Sunday afternoon and try his Madeira. A would-be waggish and not at all nice man, Mr. Shum. I was glad when his visit ended.

Then out of doors dull November; dead leaves strewn thickly over dank grass, and muddy roads,

rotten sticks which cracked, and bursting acorns which crunched beneath one's feet; a sleepy village, with dirty cottages, dilapidated church, and a barn for a school; pools of water in fields and roads, and ponds hidden by dead rushes; drizzle, fog, the churchyard smell of Nature *in extremis*; no paint, no life, no colour, no solidity anywhere visible; rather decrepit walls, worn-out thatch, cracking boughs, huge, waving black poplars—their sooty trunks at every angle but a right one—moist leaves and skeletons of leaves; old withered hags; children of stunted growth; dejected curs too ill to yelp; heavy-limbed, leaden-eyed, listless men; lazy pigs rooting for offal. Such are my recollections of Ebery.

All through, the house was cheerless. In the damp, unused hall an old mildewed hunting-whip hung against the wall over the head of a mangy fox, which, cut off close behind the ears, and with only one glass eye, grinned like a death's head at a moth-eaten jay perched in a broken case over the door. The rooms were even more gloomy: threadbare carpets, the furniture rickety and angular and scant; the curtains thin, colourless, and patched; the linen blinds of Isabella hue and

full of holes, and the ceiling cracked and dirty, and ornamented with long-deserted cobwebs ; and peering into the gloom of the corners one noticed tiny heaps of wood dust and the shrivelled-up corpses of insects long since dead. There was no sign of life, neither cat, nor dog, neither mouse nor fly ; a stray reptile which had wandered from the congenial dampness of the moss-covered yard had yielded its low life, and lay mummified on the flagged floor at the edge of a mat too rotten to raise.

On the second day Kate, our tiny, juvenile maid-of-all-work, told me that on the third floor, in the room farthest from that in which my patient lay, a man lived. "The woman's son," she said, "a poor creature, but evil disposed ; at enmity with his dying mother, and barely able to keep life in his own body." Kate attended to him, but he mostly foraged for himself when she was absent from the kitchen, for he possessed the cunning common to those whose intellect has only in part developed.

For more than a fortnight my life there was simply dull. There was no change in the condition of the patient ; she was not only resigned to death, but anxious for a termination to her suffering. The

little girl attended to us as she was able, but was an unconscionable time on her errands. The doctor came in and hummed and hahed; the curate called thrice, the postman called once—with a note for me from the matron—and time dragged on, my odd hours being spent in reading aloud Paley's *Evidences*, or Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*, to my listless patient.

The monotony was becoming dreadful; it wanted but a month to Christmas, and it seemed possible that I should have to while it away amidst the infestivity of Ebery.

In the middle drawer of the chest-upon-chest was a little store of money upon which we drew for our daily supplies. As I saw it dwindle to very small proportions, I fear I longed for it to become exhausted; only in order to see where the next supply, if any, would come from; everything was so insulse. My patient, I thought, took very little interest in it, until one day she accidentally lisped something which made me more careful of her trifling hoard; she was not a lovable object, barely likable, but really I felt more for her than for many who were far more interesting.

On the last Friday in November I noticed a

change; there could be no doubt she was sinking fast. This the doctor corroborated; she had repeatedly asked him when the end would come. He was now able to tell her. "At four o'clock to-day," he said shortly. He bade her a more kindly farewell than I thought him capable of, gave me a few final instructions, bade me good-bye, and went.

My patient seemed much relieved; she would not allow me to send for the curate. "Not again, nurse, not again—you will stay with me—tell no one," she whispered. Of course I reassured her, and I told no one.

"When's her goin' to die?" asked Kate bluntly, the next time I entered the kitchen.

I answered as kindly as I could.

"'Cos I ain't a goin' to stay here while her's dyin'. Mother says I needn't."

"What has your mother to do with it?"

"D'yer think I'd be here now if't warn't fur mother? Her'd thrape me if I went whum, but her sed I needn't stay while her's dyin'."

"Are you afraid?"

"Afeared! A course I'm afeared, so you'll be by-and-bye. I suppose you dursen't leave?"

"I should not think of leaving, nor must you," I replied, and I escaped quickly from the kitchen, for there was something in the girl's manner which alarmed me.

Slowly the hours went by, the silence broken only by the often reiterated "How long?" or "What time is it now?" of my patient, in whose condition there was no change. As it grew dusk I put the clock on half an hour and lit my small lamp. Four o'clock came; five o'clock; my patient grew restless. Six; seven; she accused me of deceiving her. And so on until midnight, when she fell into a troubled sleep. In the morning she seemed stronger, but depressed in spirits, and I could not rouse her. On Saturdays Kate's mother went to char at Frog Hall. No one came to Bracknal House. Hour after hour crawled slowly by. My patient besought me to end her suffering; if only I would give her a treble dose of medicine, or snatch from under her the pillows on which she was propped; anything which would snap the slender thread which held her to this world. These requests were so earnest, so often repeated, the state of the patient so piteous, that I fear I became somewhat unnerved. Once only I looked

out of the window; and saw an old man with his spade over his shoulder limping towards the churchyard. I turned quickly away, and my patient recommenced. She upbraided me with want of heart; reproached me for my attentions to her, and cried at my refusal to do her wish. "If I only had more money to give, you would do it, you know you would," she gasped exasperatingly, and all I could do was to sit at the dressing table, with my back towards her, my head upon my hand, and bear with it. All through that long Saturday, all through the long, long dreary night, I had to hear it; often with hands clenched and grinding teeth, and my heart listening to what I could not shut my ears to.

At last day broke. My patient was worn, and I half mad; our solitude was unbearable. I told Kate she would have to sit with my patient, and I—went to church: made my way through the thick fog which hung over the village, but cleared to show me a newly-dug grave yawning beneath the dripping yew. Everyone knew that Mrs. Bailey was dead; the doctor had told them so. They appeared, too, surprised to see me, but after service no one spoke to me except the doctor.

“Why has not Shum sent up his man to take you to the station?” he asked. I told him it was probably because his patient was not yet dead. “She died at four o’clock on Friday afternoon,” he said. “Confound it, won’t you understand?”

“I am afraid I do not.”

The doctor fumed. “The thing is *done*,” he said. “I made out the certificate yesterday, Fluck has it now, he’ll be round for the body to-morrow. You understand, don’t you?”

“I think it will be best for you to come with me now,” I answered.

“I? Oh, no, not again. I can do nothing. Good morning.”

I went back alone, Kate seemed stupefied with terror at having been left so long; in an hour or so things resumed their usual course.

As soon as possible I shut out the heavy day, but I could not make the room cheery; even my lamp refused to burn, and had to be replaced with snuffy candles. As I turned over the words of the doctor, and looked at the patient, I thought it strange that the woman was not dead. “Why could she not die?”

Perhaps I spoke the question; at any rate the

patient understood; she groaned. "I will tell you, nurse, I will tell you. I shall not die to-day unless *you*—ah, you won't! but listen to me."

I drew a chair near, and bent over to hear her story, told in short gasps: painfully, disconnectedly, but understandable.

More than fifty years ago, she said, she had loved the man who owned the house in which we were. During his absence she was faithless, or rather was coerced into marrying Mr. Bailey, a man of fierce temper and violent disposition, and who was both cruel and resentful. When her lover returned he committed suicide, "here in this room," she gasped—"with a saddle-pistol—at dead of night, on the last day of November, fifty years ago."

"And your husband?"

"He swore that I had been false, and left me, but vowed that—in fifty years—dead or alive—he would return and be avenged on me. 'When your dead lover will no longer be able to protect you,' as he said."

"But your husband is dead?"

"Yes, yes, dead."

"And your son?"

"That *thing!* He hates me—hates me—more than his father did."

"But you have not injured him?"

"No, but—I could not love—him—and he has—cursed me."

"What can you fear? None can hurt you."

"What can you know, child? For fifty years I have never been outside but ill befell me, it is only here—in the house where *he* died—that there is peace—for I am forgiven by *him*; I must join *him* before the other returns."

"No, no," I replied quickly, "you will soon be at peace; where nought can trouble you more."

"No. It is not true."

The death-bed is no place for argument. My patient was terribly agitated, so anxious did she appear to hear my answer, that her look frightened me. I took her hard, wrinkled hand in mine, and kneeling prayed for her earnestly, and as I prayed I heard short mocking laughs, and at each she clutched at my hand convulsively as if in terror. I dared not look up, my tongue was stilled, I shook with fright. Then all was silent except the heavy short breathing of the patient, her broken sobs and bronchial hiss. In time I gained sufficient

courage to look up. Her terror-stricken gaze filled me with despair ; I would have prayed but could not.

My patient was the first to speak.

“ You are afraid.”

“ No, no,” I answered.

“ Then pray.”

I could not. I passed my hand over my face, tried to persuade myself that I was only weak, nervous from long watching, that really I was not afraid ; but I got up from the bedside, and said that I would call Kate to serve tea—that I felt faint. The look of anguish on my patient’s face as I made these poor excuses was heart-rending, and filled me with shame. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding her piteous appeal to remain with her, I went along the corridor to the head of the stairs, and called Kate. There was no answer. I went down to the kitchen ; it was empty, and the fire had burned out. I called again and again, but obtained no reply. Loneliness brought back the feeling of fright, and I turned upstairs eager for companionship—even that of my dying patient.

I paused at the top of the stairs, determining to regain courage. Everything was explicable.

Kate had run away home. There was nothing to fear; no harm could come to me. I ought to be ashamed of my cowardice. I was too familiar with death for that to frighten me, and these and kindred thoughts resolved me to be brave; but my newly-recovered courage quickly left me, when, as I neared the bedroom door, I heard sounds which my patient, bedridden as she was, could not possibly have made. Footsteps were audible, the drawing out of drawers, angry exclamations, splutterings, mingled with the groans of my patient. I remember peering into the room and seeing the strange form of a man, at the head of the bed, bending over it. I drew hastily back. Then came a faint cry, "Nurse! Nurse!" I fear that I staggered rather than walked into the room. Something told me that it was only the son; and with any living creature I felt able to deal.

This strange creature was gesticulating violently a few inches from his mother's face, muttering incoherently, occasionally spluttering words which were half intelligible, "Papersh — crsse."

"What is it you want?" I asked firmly. He turned his face towards me, a small, pinched-up

hairless face, with eyes deep sunken, and lips drawn tightly across broken teeth. He was wretchedly clothed, and his ill-shapen form thin to attenuation; his limbs were long, but his body bowed—a tabid, fleshless, cretinous creature who might have been seventeen or seventy for all one could tell, but evidently weak and unable to control his movements.

He hissed a reply, the import of which I did not understand.

“You must go, if you please,” I said. “I have to attend to my patient.”

He understood, for he expostulated energetically.

“At once, please,” I said, holding the door.

I never saw a face so full of evil, perfectly demoniacal in its malignance. “*Crsse womssh*,” he hissed; but he did not go.

Unfortunately I could not hear my patient, nor could I approach closer whilst he was there. I therefore grasped him firmly by the arm, thinking to remove him; but as my fingers closed I felt that he was as strong and unyielding as one in a cataleptic fit, and instinctively my fingers relaxed until there was but the slightest pressure. “You

must go now, please," I said. "Come again if you wish—in an hour."

Somewhat to my surprise he yielded, reluctantly it is true, and with jerky movements made his way to the door, hissing and muttering and gesticulating wildly with his hands. No sooner had he passed the threshold than I sprang to the door, shut it upon him, and locked it.

He turned in a terrific fury, hammered at the door, and made the house echo with weird, horrible noises. I appreciated the mistake I had made, and opened the door, but blocked the entrance by confronting him.

"Have you forgotten anything?" I asked as calmly as I could.

A grimace was his only reply.

"Come when you will after eight o'clock," I continued, "but come quietly; you must go now." I tendered him a candle, pretending it was that he had forgotten. He motioned that he did not need it, and turned away. "The door will be unlocked after eight, but do not trouble us without cause," I called after him.

The poor patient was decidedly worse. I comforted her as well as circumstances permitted. I

must confess that I was elated at the success of my encounter with the intruder. After I had made and taken tea, and thought the matter over, I concluded that my senses had been deceived, and that I had frightened myself needlessly ; in short, I recovered my nerve, and awaited composedly to carry out whatever wishes my patient might express. She requested that I should read to her, and this I did. It seemed to distract her attention from herself, but not for long ; then she made me promise that I would not leave her again that night for anything ; to this I agreed. I sat close to the bed and kept her hand in mine, only loosing it when I needed both to minister to her wants. I remember well looking into her face, and trying to trace in the coarse features the beauty which half a century before had attracted two men, and years before that had doubtless been the happy, smiling face of a child. I was not very successful, for surely never were human lineaments so brutalised by selfishness and fear ; but I felt an intimacy as of years. What little there was in her life I *knew*, and I remember that I felt puzzled then, as I am puzzled now, as to what useful purpose such an existence as hers had been could serve.

She regarded me as her sole hope, gazed at me with a look of longing that was akin to love, and listened to every trifling thing I said, as though her salvation depended upon understanding it. No one, I am sure, had extended sympathy to her, and it was *that* she lacked. My talk was of such trifling matters as are distinctly human, and she became so far interested as to forget her immediate state. I was pleased that I had calmed her terrors, and she appeared to be so grateful for the relation of the few trifling private occurrences which concerned only myself, that I ventured to tell her of a weightier matter, one which I approached with some diffidence, and blushing like a school girl; a matter I would have confided to a loving mother, perhaps to one other; but its relation to this poor dying woman was as pleasing to her as it was surprising to me. How I came to say so much I do not know; perhaps because I knew she was dying, and would keep my poor little secret. Of course I was crying when my story finished, and the tears were rolling down her fat, furrowed cheeks too. It was unutterably silly, but I kissed her; then dried my eyes, and stood at the foot of the bed looking at her confusedly.

"God bless you, dear," she whispered, and turned her face away. Perhaps I had touched a chord which the orthodox and usual conversation would have missed.

Then I sat down at the table and wrote for a short time in my journal ; read again to my patient, but she seemed to wish to chat. She complimented me upon the prettiness of our uniform, expressed herself as satisfied with the white cuffs and the long streamers to the cap. I wished to humour her, and crossed over and snuffed the candle, that she could see better, and she told me that I was really handsome and carried my —— odd years like a girl of seventeen. I just bowed my head and replaced the snuffers, and when I looked up I saw a man's face staring at me *out* of the highly polished wood of the wardrobe. I remember that I drew a very quick breath, and the face, which had anything but a pleasing expression upon it, slowly died away from view as I looked.

I did not cry out ; I do not think that I betrayed my fear by any tremor. I could not trust myself to speak, nor should I have spoken of what I had seen ; but the very silence seemed to convey a knowledge of all to the dying woman.

"What time?" she murmured.

"A quarter past twelve," I replied.

"No. You are fast."

I remembered then that I had put on my clock fully thirty minutes the day upon which she was to have died.

"Perhaps," I replied.

"Yes, yes. Do not leave me—you do not know." Then came some terrible gasps, and she was shaken with convulsive tremors.

I made a supreme effort to be calm; I felt that I must see something beyond that terrible room. I went to the window, and pulling aside the blind looked out into the night. I was surprised to see that the fog had lifted, the moon shone brightly, the whole garden from the house to the gate was clearly visible. There was of course no one stirring; the silence was only broken by the dripping of the fog-damp from the boughs. As I gazed at the gate I distinctly heard it clang as though pushed to in haste, but it had not stirred. There was something coming along the path, for I heard the footsteps as of a person stealing, as on tip-toe, towards the house; it was clearer than day, but I could see no one—no thing.

"Nurse—nurse—it comes!"

I went to the bed, and took the woman's hand in mine; she clung to it with all the strength of her feeble grasp.

"I will not leave you," I stammered.

Again that face appeared in the wardrobe—*was* there when I looked, and faded away before my gaze.

The head of the bedstead was towards the door. I stood with my back to the door, facing the fire-place; on my left, the window; on the right, the bed; and beyond it, at the foot, the table, with the candle burning brightly upon it. I am thus particular because the occurrences of that night can be set down only as I remember them, not perhaps in the order of their exact sequence.

First (of that I am sure) the son came into the room, staggering, staring blindly, and ever blinking his strange deeply-sunk eyes. He groped his way to the wardrobe, opened it, and passed his hands along the upper shelves; brought from there a small bundle of yellow papers, waved them above his head in an unmeaning fashion, and with them tottered from the room. His young-old wizened face, his terribly emaciated frame, and his ex-

pression of wicked cunning, I can see now as plainly as though he stood before me as he did then, and as I write I hear the peculiar chuckle, the only sound he made then.

His footsteps died away in the corridor. All around, in the house and out of it, everything was still—still as the dreadful calm before the hurricane. The silence was broken by two sharp blows, as though struck with a withy switch on the window-pane. There was a firmer grip of my hand, a muttered cry of "Help!" and I reeled as I saw glide into the room a shapeless, shadowy pillar of sooty blackness, larger than human size, but with a form no better defined than that of a huge cactus: without marks, or lines, or excrescences.

It passed round to the foot of the bed, my gaze firmly riveted upon it. For a moment it passed between me and the candle, and obscured the light, and I remember noticing that the bronchitis-kettle on the fire ceased to emit its tiny puff of steam; then it again moved to the foot of the bed, and the room instantly and perceptibly darkened, just like the darkening of the stage at a second-rate theatre, when they alter the scene from noonday to dusk. Then this thing extended; as it were a

shapeless shadowy arm, or limb *was* stretching from one side and closing the door of the wardrobe; then instantly another, like the trunk of an elephant, reached out to the candle, enveloped, and extinguished it; all in very much less time than I can recall the memory. Then, in the glow of the fire and the dim light of the moon shining through the dirty, stained blinds, this sooty shadow extended upwards, bent under the canopy of the bedstead, reached in a straight line from the head to the foot of the bed immediately above the dying woman, then spread out in breadth and descended. There was a bright flash of light, a loud shriek from the corridor, a convulsive tug at my hand; voices, the hurrying of many feet, low groans, ear-piercing yells, sobs, stifled cries—but I had swooned.

When I recovered, the room was still dark, and I was alone. The candle had burned out in the socket; there was a dull, red glow from the lower bars of the grate, and all was still, the silence broken only by the almost inaudible slow ticking of my clock.

I knew that my patient was dead.

There is very little more to tell. The affairs of

the dead are no concern of mine, and the little I said to the doctor next day elicited only the fact that Mrs. Bailey had occupied the house at a peppercorn rent for fifty years. The lease ended, strange to say, the day of her death; and as she appeared to be very poor it is possible that this may have made her anxious to quit the world when she did.

My stay at the house of the dark shadow almost terminated my career as a nurse. My nerve was shattered, and for a long time I was too ill to undertake any duty. However, twelve months amid the brighter surroundings of a convalescent home have assisted my recovery, although, I am sure, the events will never fade from my memory, nor, I fancy, will their freshness be impaired by new adventures.

Retribution.

I.

THE sun had set, and the throng gathered on the gibbet-hill over against Durbuy dispersed. A few lingered expecting that at sundown the death's man, Maclet, would administer the *coup de grâce* to Bosly Velroux, whom he had that morning broken on the wheel, and who now lay groaning on the triangle ten feet above their heads. The *bourreau*, however, satisfied with his work, had no inclination to again mount the scaffold, and his young assistant had no liking for the horrid task ; so the two climbed up into their cart, taking their twine and wire with them, and made a seat of the hurdle upon which the wretched Bosly had been drawn out of the town in the morning. No one cared to stay longer, and the idlers, although they would not ride with the executioners, followed closely at the tail of the vehicle, and descended to the inhabited valley.

Very dim were the shadows thrown by the scaffold and its hideous burden, before any human creature again trod the high land; then as dusk mingled with darkness a young girl came from the direction of the hamlet of Rom, and with quick steps made her way directly to the scaffold. She peered up anxiously at the wheel, from which the blood was still dripping.

“Bosly! Bosly!” she called.

A groan was the reply.

She drew out from under her blouse a long thin rope of knotted hay-bands, and removing her sabot, tied one end round it, put a fragment of limestone in the toe, and pitched it high into the air. After several attempts she succeeded in getting it over a cross-bar of the scaffold, then drew the two ends towards one of the three uprights supporting the triangle, twisted the rope round the post, made the ends fast, and quickly scaled to where the wheel lay.

“Bosly! my Bosly!” she sobbed.

She wiped the blood and froth from his mouth and nostrils with some damp lint she had brought.

“They said thou wert living, and I came, my Bosly!”

The man looked at her and recognised her. "Misé," he groaned.

"Thy Misé! and thou know'st me?"

She placed a drinking-flask of beechwood to his lips, and he gulped down the contents greedily.

She looked at his terrible wounds, and clenched her hands in grief and misery.

"Thou hast not forgotten, Misé," he murmured.

"I live but to avenge thee, my Bosly. Oh cruel! cruel!" Her sobs stayed her words.

"Listen my Misé! Jean Bex is now at Barvaux."

"I will kill him wherever he may be."

"Not if thou hatest him—his torment must endure longer than mine. Thou hatest him, Misé?"

"Even as thou dost, my Bosly."

"Thou forgettest not thy oath?"

"Until thou art avenged seven score times thy Misé cannot forget."

"God give thee strength, my Misé."

"The good God will give thy Misé strength to avenge thee."

"Amen! Amen!"

"Thou must go, Misé."

"Not whilst thou art in torment."

"If thou'rt seen here they'll kill thee, Misé;

burn thee in the market-place at Marche, or cast thee into the *donjon* at Laroche."

"I fear not, my Bosly."

"What seest thou, Misé?"

"'Tis but the crows flying near. I will not leave thee, Bosly."

"The crows!" A look of terror came upon his face. The girl bent low and kissed him repeatedly.

"Thy father knoweth that I confessed nothing at the torture."

"He hath told me."

"At the fifth *coquemart* I accused Nyes, Jesu forgive me. Is he free?"

"Free as air, my Bosly. Thou wert brave, and thou goest from me ——"

"'Tis not they, 'tis Bex who accused falsely. 'Tis he who leaves thy Bosly to languish in torment till the crows eat his living ——"

"No! no! my Bosly!"

"Thou art brave, my Misé."

"Canst thou ask it?"

"Thou wilt not leave thy Bosly to be killed by the foul beasts of the air?"

"Aye, even so much I dare."

"Promise!"

“I promise.”

“See how brightly the stars shine, my Misé. Even as they thou wilt be if thou dost as thou hast vowed.”

“Then the brightest of all stars, thy Misé.”

“And no crow so black, no beast so foul as thee, if thou breakest thy vow!”

“Break my vows after seeing thee thus mangled here! I could serve them as thou art served, and strike but one blow a year that their torment might endure the longer.”

Her savagery pleased him.

“Tell me again how thou hatest him,” he pleaded.

“I hate him as I love thee, with all my soul.”

So they talked, until the cold night air heightened the fever of Bosly Velroux, and thus before daybreak it was only a dead body that Misé guarded, and into the heart of which she plunged again and again the short *misericorde* she had picked up on a deserted battle-field.

Then in the bright autumn morning she made her way over the crisp grass to the Devil's Seat overlooking the swift-flowing Ourthe at Barvaux, and tore her rope of knotted bands into hay by the way.

II.

It was not often that Horace Vesey was favoured with a call by Dr. Victor Colquhon; for the latter was a young man with a rapidly-growing practice, and although his increasing fortune was due to his success in the hypnotic treatment of dipsomaniacs, kleptomaniacs, and other *décadents*, he had to some extent forsaken the "promise of his spring," and joined forces with the materialistic section. He had taken as his motto *Facta non verba*. He practised, he did not preach. The facts of animal magnetism satisfied him; he had no time for ideas; so that, although he was constantly employed, he made no progress—that is to say what Vesey considered progress; the Income Tax Commissioners thought differently.

Dr. Colquhon, however, was not disinclined to consult Vesey whenever he had a case which was not within a reasonable time amenable to mesmeric influence, and he now had a patient who troubled him sorely.

"He was introduced to me by Wimpole of

Stockton, or Sunderland, or some place that way," said Colquhon, "suffering from insomnia. Of course he had been drugged to death, and was half poisoned with morphia when I first had him. A very difficult case, but after a time I became hopeful; but then I knew only part of the truth. Progress was checked, the patient grew rapidly worse. I knew that something was being withheld, but at last he told me all. I have the story written out; for I knew you idealists rely upon an exact substratum of fact. Read it and tell me what you think."

"What opinion have you formed?" asked Vesey.

"Oh, the man is mad, there is no doubt about *that*; but I want to cure him, and I am persuaded that you can tell me how."

The Statement of James Bechman.

"I was born at G—— in the year 1861. So far as I know I have no hereditary taint. Until after my marriage I enjoyed perfect health, and in the year 1884 was accepted as a first-rate risk by the —— Life Assurance Co. for £3,000, which policy was made over to M——, now my wife, by an

ante-nuptial settlement. With reference to M—, she is two years my junior. I felt drawn towards her when we first met (a year and a half before marriage), it being a case of what Goëthe terms elective affinity. I was quite happy when she consented to be my wife. From the day of our first meeting to the moment of writing this paper we have never quarrelled, nor has there been any serious disagreement between us. My wife, both before and since our marriage, has had good health, and the trouble I have experienced has never been felt by her; and although she is very sympathetic in other matters, she is, apparently, quite unconcerned at my sufferings—she says they are wholly imaginary.

“My trouble commenced during our honeymoon; I am unable to fix the exact date. My earliest recollection is of a sensation: the feeling one has upon awakening after a bad dream, the details of the dream itself being entirely forgotten. I dreamed but rarely before I was married; afterwards, as I have stated, I remember being awakened by a sort of nightmare. At first the impressions of the dream were faint, and I quickly fell asleep again. The next night, or the next

night but one, the dream would be repeated ; then it occurred not only every night, but twice, even thrice, and the details were all forgotten on awakening, but the impression ever grew. The sense of oppression increased ; the agony became so great I dared not, after awakening, again fall asleep. By my side my wife lay sleeping calmly and happily, a sweet smile on her baby face, and often her hand thrown over me as in the caress with which she dozed into unconsciousness. I took a sleeping-draught ; for one night my slumber was undisturbed, but I arose in the morning unrefreshed. Repeating the experiment, I found to my dismay that the opiate not only failed to prevent the recurrence of the dream, but increased the agonising sensation I always experienced on awakening. I at once consulted Dr. W——. He attributed the restlessness to business worries, and prescribed a change of air and scene. It was impossible to act upon his suggestion at once, but I arranged for a short continental tour, and started as soon as business engagements allowed.

“At that time the after-effects of the dream were felt by me as a distinct sensation of pain in

my right arm and leg, a terrible oppression of the chest, and a prevailing languor I cannot specify. The remedies prescribed by the doctors were taken; all had the same effect—they heightened the sensation, and the insomnia increased. I therefore discontinued medicine, and took narcotics but sparingly, and only when in fits of desperation.

“The tour my wife and I had planned was through Brussels and the Belgian Ardennes to Luxemburg, thence to the Black Forest, and home by Strasburg and Paris. We stayed at Ghent and Bruges, and there my malady increased. At Brussels I first remembered the dream—that terrible tragedy I have endured so many hundreds of times since.

“I felt that I was bound to a wheel; that with a heavy bar of iron some person struck at me, breaking each of my limbs, not always at the first blow, for in all thirteen blows were felt, the two last crushing in the ribs of my right and left sides respectively. The pain was excruciating and the languor intolerable; I felt beside myself with frenzy. But all these details I have already given you by word of mouth.

“We hurriedly left Brussels, and the next place at which we stayed was Barvaux. I had never been there before, indeed had never been out of England, but the place seemed strangely familiar. As we walked over the hills to Durbuy I saw nothing that was fresh; the ruined chapel, the arched cliffs, the woods, the slaty-topped hills—one and all I had seen somewhere. I did not need to ask or to be shown the way. Durbuy bored us, and we walked out to an adjoining hamlet, the name of which I forget if I ever knew it, but the locality was familiar. Then we walked towards Barvaux. Tired, we sat down to rest. After the manner of those suffering from insomnia I dozed. The dream came again, more vivid than ever before. The wheel I saw was now mounted on a triangular scaffold right where we were, one corner pointing to Barvaux, the other to Durbuy. I could have shrieked with terror, but nothing, my wife states, escaped my lips.

“After I had endured my martyrdom, and sunk into that ever-increasing agony which is death, I noticed that a figure was regarding me. In time, for I was feeble and confused with the torture I endured, I saw the face of the figure which looked

upon me and gloated over my anguish—*it was the face of my wife!*

“I can write no more you do not already know. We left that accursed district at once. Dr. W—— persuaded me to confide in you. You know that your treatment for a time alleviated my suffering. The dream returns, is ever-recurrent; many, many times a day I have had to endure it, and always with the full details as for the first time experienced at Barvaux. Is it to *kill* me? Will it first drive me *mad*? Is there *nothing* in medicine, nothing in *science*, which will give me twenty-four, aye twelve, or even *six* hours’ relief? My torment is unendurable.”

Vesey read without showing that he felt the least interest or sympathy. He tossed the paper idly aside, asking, “Have you his wife’s statement?”

“Great Scott, no!” vehemently replied Colquhon.

“Well, you advised a separation, of course.”

“Naturally.”

“And it does not succeed, or you would not be here.”

“I think it might have done, but the fellow would not keep away, or go far enough away. I

worked very hard ; he was the very worst subject to hypnotise I ever met. If it had not been that I was proud of my reputation in the matter, I should not have persevered to the extent I did. Well, to some extent he got better, and I had him so far under control that he at last consented to take a voyage in a sailing ship to New Zealand, and leave his wife here with her friends. The fellow had not been gone three months before he was back ; got put ashore, or aboard a passing vessel, and turns up declaring that he was worse whilst going away than when returning."

Vesey did not appear to have been listening. He had before him two large musty folios he had reached from one of the closed presses, and was calmly turning over the leaves. "There is no doubt this is the case mentioned in a note to *Damhoudere*, the Antwerp folio edition of 1648 ; if so, full particulars are contained in the 'Archives du grand Greffe des Echevins,' province of Liege. It appears that some time during the rule of Archbishop Ernest, probably about 1609, one Bosly Velroux was broken on the wheel at Durbuy for some outlawry. Later, during the period of Ferdinand, a woman called Misé de Rom,

or Derome, was accused of witchcraft at Laroche by one Jean Bex; he testified that by her sorcery she caused him great suffering and damage both to body and effects. This she denied. Put to the torture, she accused Bex of having sworn falsely and brought about the execution of the man Velroux, and attributed the misery of Bex to the remorse he felt at having caused the degradation and punishment of an innocent man. There appears to have been some investigation made; for Bex adhered to his statement later, and specified the particular witchcraft, as being tortured with *brodequins* and the wheel, and declared that on these occasions he saw the accused Misé sitting on the scaffold looking at him and gloating over his anguish. The woman was then again put to the torture, and declared that on the night of the execution she had climbed on to the scaffold and conversed with the culprit, and her words were written down; and she made oath that her accuser knew at the time of this, and that it was his own conscience which troubled him. This declaration was sufficient to warrant Bex being put to the torture, and we are informed that he died at the seventh *coquemart*. How this fact was twisted

round as corroborative evidence of the guilt of Misé only a *greffier* of that epoch could make clear; but there is no doubt that Misé, after lying for a time in a donjon of Laroche Castle, was duly executed upon the accession of Maximilian Henry to the episcopate; that is to say, about 1650."

"And the only evidence you have to connect these two is the fancied retrocognition of a landscape by a hypersensitive neuropath?"

"I have sufficient evidence to convince me; it is you who need the proof of connecting links."

"I do not hold the theory of reincarnation."

"Of course *you* do not. Whoever would think you guilty of that heresy, Vic.?"

"Have your little joke, since it pleases you. You overlook the fact that it is no trifling matter to this poor fellow. Take a serious view of the case."

"Your interesting patient with his imaginary disorder."

"Insomnia is not hypochondriasis."

"Then disordered imagination, if you so prefer it——"

Dr. Colquhon made a gesture of dissent.

"We have his view of the trouble. Let us regard it from his wife's standpoint."

"Why his wife's?"

"Is she consciously or unconsciously producing his uncomfortable condition? Has he wronged her? Is it part of the vengeance of Bosly Velroux? Is it her revenge for the pain felt by Misé Derome as she sped down the hillside at Laroche inside the barrel lined with spikes?"

"Was the woman killed that way?"

"You do not need to be told how they served witches in Flanders in the middle of the seventeenth century."

"Wait! The only particulars I have relating to Mrs. Bechman are concerning a number of strange star-shaped cicatrices on the face and arms. A fine, tall, fair, clear-skinned woman but for these *maculosa*. The scars are just such as would be produced by the incision of spikes."

"Colquhon of little faith! A regarder of birthmarks, moles, lines on the palm, creases of the skin and their possible significance, yet ignoring the obvious source of their origin. But we are agreed; we assume that James Bechman two hundred and

fifty years ago was Jean Bex ; that M. was Misé of Rom ?”

“ Assume it ? Yes, but it is only assumption.”

“ Assuming it, James Bechman suffers what he deserves.”

“ Man ! where is your pity ?”

“ I feel none.”

“ No sympathy for his suffering ?”

“ None.”

“ Yet be merciful. Mercy is of all qualities the ——”

“ Pah ! Nature knows no such quality. Mercy has no place in the scheme of creation. Mercy is base currency, justice the only legal tender.”

“ Be just to him then.”

“ And to others.”

“ What will you do ?”

“ Nothing.”

“ What am I to do to alleviate his torment ?”

“ Nothing.”

“ I must do something.”

“ Oh well ! Treat the symptoms in the usual way as they arise. It will amount to ——”

There was a knock at the door. “A gentleman, sir, to see Dr. Colquhon, Mr. Bechman ——”

But the servant was pushed aside.

A tall large-formed man strode hurriedly into the room. He was very thin, nervous, and trembling like one worn with fever. His eyes shone brightly, but his gaze was wandering. His face was partly hidden by a bushy black beard and very heavy eyebrows, but the darkness of the hair, and the tiny bright red patches on each cheek, only heightened his pallor. Every feature, every line, every movement expressed his suffering; his imaginary torment was a dreadful reality to him.

His presence roused Vesey, but the emotion he felt was betrayed by the restless movement of his lips only; his eyes looked as dreamy as though he saw nothing of what was taking place before him.

"It is with me now, waking or sleeping!" cried the intruder. "Oh, Colquhoun, do *something* for me! I have not slept an instant since I saw you yesterday, and I have suffered the torment six times. Help me! Save me! You must! You shall!"

"Come, come now, my dear fellow, calm yourself. No nonsense here!" said Colquhoun.

“Calm yourself? See! There’s the hurdle! and the wheel!” he pointed to the floor, and looked at Vesey’s thick Turkey pile in terror. Then he clenched his fists, flexed his arms spasmodically, and then threw himself to the ground in a paroxysm.

Colquhon would have raised him, but Vesey motioned him to be quiet. Then the wretched man, with varied contortions, acted as though the executioner were performing his barbarous work. The limbs twitched, and shrank as from expected blows; and the man groaned and shrieked, and called for mercy; prayed and cursed by turns. Then the paroxysm subsided, and he fell into a state of torpor, groaning faintly and calling for water.

Vesey was clumsily rolling a cigarette, Colquhon was watching his patient, looking up from time to time and glancing furtively at Vesey.

Then the man stirred as though awakening from a deep sleep, looked listlessly about him, passed his hand over his face and raised himself on one elbow. Colquhon watched him closely but remained silent. Then he appeared to recover himself; he arose, threw himself wearily into a low

chair, put his elbows on his knees and buried his face in his hands. For some time no one spoke ; then the visitor asked :

“Does your friend know all?”

Vesey answered immediately and with emphasis “I know all.”

“Can you help me?”

“No one can help you.”

“Then I must end my misery by death.”

“You know that will not end it.”

The man looked up in alarm. Two minutes of oppressive silence elapsed before he asked, “What am I to do?”

“Undo what you have done.”

“I have done nothing,” he expostulated weakly.

“So you say, so you tell your wife. This statement of yours”—and he pushed the folded paper away from him with his still unlighted cigarette—“informs me to the contrary. You have not written the truth. Goëthe und Wahlverwandschaft, forsooth! Your marriage was not for love; yours was but an affinity like that of the base metal for a pure element which it consumes, but is shrunken instead of enlarged by its nourishment. More, you have dared to violate the

grandest emotion Nature has evolved. By what false accusation did you separate your wife from him whom she loved? By what lies did you coerce her into the loveless union with yourself? You know the wrong you have done; you know a part of the punishment. What will cure you is the sympathy of others, but this *your* sufferings will never excite; and the greater they become the more you will pity yourself and so feed your malady. You know the remedy; repair the injury you have done unto others. Neither in time nor eternity can you have justice until you have freely rendered it; you can decide *when*. Take your patient away, Colquhon, and leave him where he may effect his own cure."

"But are these accusations true?" queried the doctor incredulously.

"They are true," muttered the man, sitting with hands clenched on his knees, and glaring ashamedly at the carpet.

The doctor looked enquiringly at Vesey. "You regard symptoms, I study causes," the other replied, as he threw the unsmoked cigarette upon the hearth, and walked to the door.

The Sleepless Man.

I.

THE POST TRAIN.

A FEW minutes after the train had left St. Petersburg, the passengers in the sleeping-car had arranged their packages and sat down to talk to each other.

My *vis-à-vis* was a stout, elderly, bald-headed man, with a dark moustache, heavy double-chin, and peculiarly arched eyebrows. He had the air of a sleepy man who could with difficulty keep awake.

He took out a tobacco-pouch and rolled a cigarette, a sure indication that his home was, or had been, in the south of Russia.

I tendered him a light. After thanking me, and looking at my baggage, he asked me if I was on a sporting tour.

I answered that I was travelling to Moscow

with the intention of getting some bear and elk shooting with a friend who lived on the Yaroslav Railway.

“I am a great sportsman, or rather I was before my wife died. My health will not now permit me to indulge in field sports as I used to do. Still I shoot one or two bears every winter, and occasionally an elk.”

“Do you live near Moscow?”

“At Lieschneva, on the Knieschma Railway. There is plenty of large game in the district. The will to hunt is still great within me, but I am weak, nervous, and physically incapable of exercise. I will tell you how the change came about. We were living in Odessa, my wife, son, daughter, and myself. It was vacation time, my boy was home from the university, my daughter had finished her education, and we were preparing for a trip to the Crimea; my wife went into town to make some necessary purchases. They brought her home in the evening—dead. She had been run over in the street by a carriage and pair, and from the moment she was knocked down had never opened her mouth to speak. It was a great shock to me; to my children also; but they were young, and

recovered. I was terribly prostrated, fever supervened, chronic nervousness resulted, and from that day to this, now nearly five years ago, I have never had a refreshing sleep. You cannot understand this? It is nevertheless true. I have travelled, I have tried the remedies prescribed by the best doctors in Vienna, Paris, and London. I have consulted them personally, and followed their advice as to diet, change of climate, and all that sort of thing, but the only sleep I get is obtained from a dose of chloral, or sometimes from a milder opiate I receive from a physician in Paris. It is very bad. I always want to go to sleep and yet can never do so. If for instance I go out shooting, after walking a few yards I am overcome with fatigue, the gun falls from my hands, I sink to the ground and doze, but for a few seconds only. I awake and am unable to continue my sport—return home, lie down, but cannot sleep. My daughter plays to me, for she is a great musician, and when she plays I seem to be a little refreshed. She is a great singer too! Do you know that there are two Patti? one the Italian Patti—Adelina; the other, the Caucasian Patti, my daughter, Tatiana, whose acquaintance

you must make. She is in the ladies' car, for, as you know, tobacco smoke is very bad for the voice, and she has a splendid voice, a soprano of great volume. She can play with the C in alt, play with it, sir, and even one or two notes still higher she can sing distinctly and with ease. There is a great future before my daughter, but unfortunately she wants practice and the aid of a first class teacher. She is too devoted to me to live in towns where such a master can be procured, and I cannot live in any large town, not even in Moscow, where last year I purchased a house for ourselves. You must understand that my daughter's voice is strong, rich, and powerful, and as she had constantly to practice, the neighbours complained to our landlord. It became almost impossible to keep a fine suite of apartments, so I bought a house—not a very large one, but still a fine dwelling—standing in its own yard and garden in the best part of Moscow, near the Pretschenska, in a quiet street with but little traffic. It was of no use, I could not live there, and we returned to our summer place at Lieschneva. Ah, you do not know the life I lead, unable to go to sleep, unable to forget cares,

even for a time, never for an instant to be oblivious to what is going on about you. Can you imagine anything more dreadful? Then to see people sleeping calmly, how terribly annoying! It irritates me to such an extent that I shriek out in agony, and they wake up and abuse me. So do you know what I did? It was the only thing to be done. I married a gipsy woman from Arcadia! You know that pleasure resort at St. Petersburg. The gipsy band of singers seems to be always there; at whatever hour of the day or night you may command them they straight-way appear. I thought that one of these women, used to being awake all through the night, and night after night, would never annoy me by lying at my side fast asleep, so I married one of them."

He sighed and remained silent, from which I inferred, from his point of view this second marriage had been a failure. When next he spoke he evaded my leading questions, and turned the conversation into another channel.

By-and-bye he began to recount his sporting exploits, and I related certain of my experiences upon a yachting trip in the North Sea—a

memorable voyage, for none of us got to sleep for nearly a week.

"Yes, *you* had something to keep you awake."

"Apart from that, English sailors can live and be well with but very little sleep," I remarked.

"I do not know that. Have they no wish to sleep?"

"Possibly, but they are so used to having only four hours' sleep in the day that they neither need nor desire much more."

"It is possible."

"For instance, Captain Boyle, of the *Babara*, arrived at St. Petersburg from Liverpool, a voyage of eleven days, during which he had only eight hours' sleep in his bunk, and an odd hour or so from time to time in the chart-room, yet, having a chance of a trip to Moscow with friends, he started off by the post train on Tuesday, and when he got back on the Friday neither he nor his friends had once closed their eyes in sleep."

"I should like to know Captain Boyle. I should like to travel with such a man. Can you do without sleep?"

"Fairly well," I answered.

"Come down to Lieschneva with me. It is very

quiet, but you will have plenty of sport by day, and at night we can play cards, talk or amuse ourselves in some way. My daughter is always telling me to find a companion, but my Russian neighbours—you can imagine what they are like after dinner—as torpid as a boa-constrictor which has swallowed an ox.

“Why do I not make a companion of my son? He prefers the society of younger men than myself. He is in the capital, and is doing all he can to spend my money. I think he will succeed in spending all our fortune. But what does that matter? My father left me a little more than two million roubles, I spent them as fast as I could, I did not squander them; that is to say, I always obtained fair value for my money. I have still more than one million roubles, in addition to my little estate at Lieschneva. My daughter has four hundred thousand roubles left her by her mother, and although my son is only twenty-two, and is spending two or three thousand roubles every month, there will still be enough left for us. So, what does it matter after all, even if the young man does spend a thousand roubles or more every month and enjoys himself.

“Ah! here is my daughter, Tatiana Glebevna Nalivaete, the Caucasian Patti.”

A well-dressed young girl with fair hair, a sallow complexion and spare figure, came into the car and sat for a few minutes with us. Her eyes, unlike her father's, were bright, sparkling, and lustrous, but she had his air of lassitude. She was thin to attenuation, and seemed to be haggard, worn, and restless from constant watching. Having satisfied herself that her father was comfortable, she retired to her own car, and we again conversed upon sporting topics.

Very early in the evening the Russian had his berth made up for the night—it was the upper cross berth, and opposite to mine. He took a small quantity of a colourless fluid, and I sat under the lamp reading the last number of *The Field*, which I had obtained in St. Petersburg. Whenever I looked towards his berth I saw him lying with his eyes wide open, and gazing vacantly at me.

At about eleven o'clock his daughter again paid us a visit, and shortly afterwards I got into my berth.

“Are you asleep?” I asked.

“No, never again to sleep, never again to sleep,”

and he turned over wearily, so that I could no longer see his face.

I do not know that sleeplessness is infectious, but neither I nor anyone else in that car slept soundly that night—even that common terror of the sleeping car, the persistent snorer, was silent, for all were awake—some reading, some restlessly turning from side to side, or ever and anon lighting cigarettes and breaking the silence with a few words spoken in a low tone to their neighbour, or occasionally someone, with an ejaculation of impatience, would turn his face to the wall and resolutely court sleep and rest.

Only my friend remained still and silent. Yet he was awake, I knew it; everyone in the car knew it; but, with his face averted, he lay as motionless as though he had been of carved stone.

Towards three o'clock in the morning his daughter quietly entered the car. Her thin straw-coloured hair hung loose about her shoulders, her shapeless gown showed all the angularities of her spare figure, her restless eyes glanced rapidly from one occupant of a berth to another, and as she neared where her father lay I closed my eyes.

She did not speak, her hand sought his, there was a gentle pressure, her head was bent down as she gazed into his face, a silent kiss, and she quietly and quickly withdrew, hiding her face in the woollen wrap she had thrown over her shoulders.

Is it unnatural that I was anxious to learn more about the sleepless man and his devoted daughter?

Before we reached Tver, and took our coffee, I had determined to accept his invitation to Lieschneva, and at Moscow all the details were settled as we breakfasted together. Early in the afternoon we drove to the terminus of the Nijni-Novogorod Railway, to catch the only train in the day to Knieschma.

II.

THE FAMILIAR.

It was an uneventful ride to Knieschma. The travellers were few, and the journey was broken by a long wait and change of trains at the Junction. Towards six o'clock in the morning

we arrived at the small wayside station which was nearest to my host's estate.

It wanted two hours to break of day, but there was quite a company of peasants with lanterns awaiting our arrival. The sledges were at once loaded up, and we commenced our drive of twenty-five miles through the forest to Kertchemskoi, following for some miles the road to Lieschneva—if a barely indicated track through the forest and over the moorland may be termed a road—we then left the highway for the sledge path to the villages, and as in each sledge there was room but for one person besides the driver, and the sledges kept in Indian file, it was impossible for me either to communicate with my host who was in front, or with his daughter, whose sledge with three others conveying the baggage followed mine.

We passed through several villages, all very much alike, and neither in the landscapes nor in the homesteads was there anything worthy of admiration or notice.

Shortly after eight o'clock the first sledge got some distance ahead, and I noticed that a sledge with a single occupant was trotting along before

mine. My driver hurried his horse, but we could not gain upon the sledges in front, and looking backwards I noticed that Tatiana and the baggage sledges were falling far in the rear. Thinking that my host wished to arrive in advance of us, I slackened speed; but we did not lose sight of the two sledges, although both drove rapidly ahead.

At about nine o'clock we reached Kertchemskoi and our house. It was a dreary one-story dwelling of wood, and stood within its own yard at some distance from the road, and a couple of hundred yards outside the village. It was apparently deserted, but the entrance gates, as we neared them, were thrown open by a stalwart young peasant, and several domestics were gathered about the porch awaiting our arrival.

Nalivaete's sledge was empty, and the over-driven horse was being unharnessed. The second sledge was nowhere visible, although I was sure I had seen it driven into the yard close behind that of my host.

And Nalivaete, when I saw him, tremblingly grasped my hand as he stammered a few words of welcome. The domestics silently helped us to

take off our heavy cloaks and overshoes, and Tatiana, all bustle and talking nonsense with great volubility, alone made a show of hospitality.

By-and-by Nalivaete apologised for the scanty accommodation his house provided, but which, as a sportsman conversant with the rough and ready methods of country life, he hoped I would not despise.

The room assigned to me was a small bed-chamber at one of the angles, and at the farthest extremity of the large and well-heated hall which separated the kitchens and outbuildings from the rest of the house.

With the exception of a small hanging mirror, the ikon, and a shelf of books, my room contained nothing but the furniture absolutely indispensable to a bed-chamber.

The living-rooms were larger and sumptuously furnished, especially the best reception or music room, which had an elegant cabinet, a grand piano from a fashionable maker, and a large Persian divan.

Madam Nalivaete, I was told, was still sleeping, and was absent from the breakfast-table. My host talked of sport, dozed, told us his symptoms,

drank freely, and seemed to be terribly bored and weary.

Tatiana spoke in monosyllables, listened without interest to my feeble attempts at jocularities, and appeared undecided as to whether she should weep or go to sleep. Surely never did a meal drag on as did that one.

Breakfast finished, Tatiana played, at her father's request, a few pieces of classical music, but excused herself from singing, and retired to her apartments.

In the afternoon we sent for the *staritza*, or chief villager, and arranged with him the details of a hunt—three bears having taken up their winter quarters near a neighbouring village. Two land-owners, friends of my host, were to meet us at eleven next morning, and the beaters were all quickly engaged. There was nothing more for us to do until the morrow, and how to occupy the two-and-twenty hours which intervened was a puzzle.

It was impossible to interest my host in anything. "He had," he said, "played every game of cards there was to be played—chess, backgammon, chequers, five stones, puzzles, acrostics, all bored

him," and he proved that he was fast becoming a confirmed melancholic hypochondriac.

The dinner was the sole remaining event of the day. We dined at six, and Madame Nalivaete presided. She was a taciturn woman, with the features and manners of the gipsy—a combination of the gluttonous untaught savage, and the alluring voluptuous gipsy queen. Her coal-black eyes—her only beauty—were most attractive, and had evidently been trained to serve their owner well—they sparkled with merriment at the weakest jest, rewarded with a kindly glance of encouragement the little attentions of Tatiana to her father, and spoke volumes of love in answer to the polite flatteries of her melancholy husband. She looked frequently towards and at me, but where I saw only sprightly roguishness there lurked the cunning of a fox.

The dinner was a good one, and the *menu* would have satisfied any gourmand. Fresh caviare; rich soup made from a fish similar to our bream; fresh fish caught from the lake through a hole in the ice; a fillet of beef; roast venison, game *pâtés*; apple cake, ices, Russian wines, kvas, coffee and liqueurs, and of everything a profuse abundance.

Tatiana ate but little. I was sure that she had both wept and slept since she had left us after breakfast; now she assumed an air of gaiety so *distracte* as to be painfully evident. Madame Nalivaete also was acting; only the sick man was natural in his behaviour; and when we at length retired from the table he lay down silent and motionless upon the divan, with his eyes vacantly staring at the cornice.

With piano, guitar, and mandoline we whiled away a few hours, but the merriment was too forced to continue long.

Tatiana retired shortly after midnight, and a little later I went to my room, though in no mood for sleep. I never felt more wakeful. My brain was strangely excited, and in some measure to compose my thoughts I took down a book, and without undressing lay down to read.

The volume was a ribald, jesting work, in French, published in Paris in the year three, the production of some wicked wit who had written when his world was mad, and his piquant if blasphemous stories lost nothing of their point from squeamishness on the part of either writer or printer.

The book was not worth reading, but there was nothing on the shelf more interesting, and I read on until I heard the tick-tick of the death-watch, and looking up met the eyes of the ikon, smiling benignly through the smoky mist arising from the tiny lamp ever burning before it.

I closed the book and listened. From the music room came the patter of the gipsy woman, interspersed with an occasional weird yell—that usual accompaniment of the peculiar dance of the Romany people, and I thought I saw the languid look of the recumbent Russian as he lay, silently and without interest, gazing at her gyrations.

In another apartment a young girl was weeping, or praying, and here I lay reading the wretched witticisms of a mad man!

Veritably this is “a mad world, my masters”; but as perforce we must continue in our madness I banished serious thoughts, and resumed the perusal of the old French book.

But my attention was divided. I heard that the death-watch ticked with greater vigour, the shrieks from the other room were in earnest, the sound of a real sob reached my ear from the distant chamber. My hand trembled, my sight

became dim, the light waned, and a cold, clammy hand touched my throat! It was but a waking nightmare, to be shaken off by determined resolution. I arose, lit another candle, retrimmed the little lamp before the ikon, threw aside my book for once and all, and after smoking a cigarette felt drowsy and dropped asleep.

But in a moment came again that cold, clammy hand, insidiously creeping along my throat, the better to obtain a firm grip. I awoke with a start to see the room filled with a faint bluish vapour, in which some indistinct figures seemed to be moving.

Neither nervous nor superstitious, nor yet subject to illusions, I arose gaily; the vision—if vision it were—was quickly dispelled, and somewhat puzzled at being unable to sleep, I determined to pass the night in company with my host.

As I made my way to the music-room I heard the voice of Tatiana singing a topical song. Then she stopped, and played the hunting chorus from *Dorothy*.

I entered the room noiselessly and unheeded. The gipsy was sitting in a chair opposite her husband, silent and sullen, with a dogged look of

active discontent upon her face; the husband motionless as usual, and with eyes averted. Tatiana, in her travelling gown, her hair loose, and with tears fast coursing down her cheeks, seemed to be playing against time upon the piano. She changed, from time to time, without pause, from grave to gay, from simple air to intricate key fingering, a musical medley such as an artist intent upon a *tour de force* might choose to execute, as proof of staying power and an extensive repertoire.

Madam, grim, taciturn, and sulky, stared at me sullenly; but Tatiana, at length perceiving me, turned her face away, but not so quickly that I failed to see her anguish.

No interference was possible. Quietly I walked back to my room and paced impatiently to and fro until the music stopped, then I crept rather than walked towards the room once more. At the threshold I paused; the door was open; I could see the greater part of the apartment, the gipsy woman was not there. Tatiana, still seated at the piano, was watching her father, who, as though in a trance and quite unconscious of what he was doing, moved mysteriously about the room,

now crouching near the table, now violently gesticulating at the divan, again walking without apparent motive from one object to another, until at last, bursting with spasmodic sobs, he knelt with bowed head before the holy picture. Tatiana rose and knelt by his side, and his sobbing became less violent just as a light hand was placed upon my shoulder, and an icy cold finger touched my neck. I looked round to meet the flashing eyes of Madame Nalivaete, gazing angrily into mine.

“Is Monsieur a spy?” she hissed.

“Your guest, Madame, and your husband’s.”

“Do you understand the meaning of this?” and she gesticulated her disgust of what was taking place in the room.

“Your husband suffers.”

“Pfu! A madman! You may learn more some day, take care that while here you do not learn too much.”

“I am already interested.”

“In what cannot concern you. Would it not be better to retire?”

“If I can but serve you by so doing.”

“I wish it,” and she turned away impatiently,

walking through the hall towards her own apartments.

I went to mine, but not to sleep, and I was still thinking of what I had witnessed, when some hours after a servant brought me coffee, and the business of an eventful day had to be commenced.

III.

THE BEAR HUNT.

Than the bear hunt there is nothing more enjoyable. The short, brisk drive over the cold snow to the village nearest to the bear's winter lair; the merry chatter of the villagers who have gathered to witness your arrival; the earnest bargaining of the *staritsa* with his beaters; the pretty faces of the young girls as they shyly peep from under their hoods at a strange face; the good-humoured smiles of the buxom dames who have come into the ring to see that their husbands are not cheated by the *staritsa*; the muttered criticisms of the sour-tempered old men who made such good bargains and had such excellent sport

in their youth ; the new white sheepskins, the gay-coloured handkerchiefs of the women, the clear bright sunshine making the snowflakes sparkle, and brightening even the dull dark forest in the background, all furnish their quota of life to a scene which for earnestness, excitement, and gaiety has no equal.

But there is a bear hunt of a different kind, and it was to one of these that my host introduced me. The *staritza* was melancholy, there were no beaters visible, and as we walked through the village to hunt them up the young ones hurried from our path, and the able men sat listening to our commands with apathy. The day was dull and the snow fitfully falling. We started out for the forest, a small band, trudging wearily through the deep snow in half-hearted fashion ; we were silent from ill-humour, not from love of the chase. We aroused the bear with a pistol shot, for none had the heart to cheer, and the sleepy brute ran directly towards my rifle and promptly fell to my aim, never to rise again. The peasants grumblingly swung him to a pole, and in silence we marched back to the village, where our arrival received no comment. From beginning to end it was a

wretched business, unworthy of the name of sport, and my success produced only a feeling of disgust.

The remainder of the day we passed as we had the preceding one, and I went to bed early hoping to sleep soundly; but I dreamed again, this time of the bear hunt. I was again at my post in the forest, and a bear—an immense animal—was advancing towards me. I fired, but it still came on; I fired again and again until I had no loaded weapon left, and the brute reared within arm's length. I hastily seized my knife, but too late; the great animal falls heavily upon me, and, buried in the snow, beneath his great rough chest I feel the heavy weight of his body, as his ponderous paw upon my breast forces me still further into the snow.

I am crushed beneath his heavy flesh, stifled with the thick shaggy hot wool about his throat—I struggle to free myself, believing it is but a dream from which I shall soon awake. I do wake—it is *not* a bear which is burying me, but a monster feather-bed, with Nalivaete a-top, and by him held down tightly over my head. His knees are upon my chest, and he it is who, by exerting his great strength, is murdering me in his madness.

It is impossible to escape. I am fast losing consciousness—there is singing in my ears—I gasp for breath and inhale feathers, nearly suffocated. I gasp again, and—wake. The house is silent, and it is sometime before I can realize that all I have suffered is but a dream.

Sleep in the house seems to be quite impossible. As soon as I am sufficiently composed I again reach down the French book and commence to read.

It seemed to me that in a few minutes the book fell from my hands, and that I dozed into a troubled sleep. I see Nalivaete come into my room and gaze at the bed. He listens, then disappears through the door into the adjoining apartment, quickly reappearing with a large soft cushion, and holding it before him in both hands he steals on tiptoe to the bedside. I see now for the first time the face of a fair woman lying upon my pillow. Nalivaete covers it with the cushion, and springs savagely upon the bed, kneading the writhing body as he sways from side to side upon his knees, grinning with demoniacal delight at the slight indications of movement under the pillow, which he holds down with both hands as

determinedly as though he expected a thousand furies to spring from underneath it. The struggles cease; a look half of pleasure half of pain appears upon his face, to disappear instantly as he raises himself and notices, looking at him as from the wall, two human eyes, clear, brilliant, conscious. No face nor figure is visible; but those eyes have witnessed this foul deed. Trembling he stands up, and now as he raises the pillow to screen his face from those penetrating glances, the eyes change their position, coming nearer to me. He cannot hide himself from them. Fearful of moving, upbraided by their steady, reproachful look, he is constrained to regard the face upon the pillow, a face dreadfully altered, discoloured, distorted, motionless, soulless—dead! 'Tis enough; the face disappears, and I see the trembling form of Nalivaete kneeling humbly before the ikon, his head bowed and his frame shaking convulsively as he sobs aloud.

Then I feel an icy cold hand upon my throat. I see that Nalivaete shudders as I am touched, and his sobs cease.

As I slowly awake there is a numbed feeling about my neck, and the room seems to be filled

again with a thin bluish vapour, in which some unrecognisable figures are indistinctly to be seen moving about. There are two eyes quite plainly visible other than the eyes of the ikon, but as I become more clearly conscious of my surroundings they appear to be less distinct, and slowly fade from my sight.

Confused, nervous, weary, and in a sleeping-waking dazed state, I grope together the bed coverings and stagger into the music room, where I lay myself down unthinkingly upon the divan and fall again into slumber, which is undisturbed until soon after dawn. The servant again brings me coffee, and tells me that my host and his daughter have already risen.

IV.

THE WIZARD.

“Ah, you have had a bad dream I fear, my friend.” Nalivaete came quietly towards the divan and sat down by my side.

“Will you tell me your dream?” he asked, as I, feeling very stupid, helped myself to the coffee.

"Yes, certainly. I have been dreaming. A disagreeable dream, but of no consequence."

"Do not say that. All dreams are of consequence, but no one seems to have pointed out yet how important dreams are in moulding character and in determining certain actions."

"I never regard mine as of importance. How have you slept?"

"But very little, not that I have not dreamt. I am haunted by dreadful day dreams, from which there is no awaking."

"Is it always the same dream?"

"Always the same subject, but variously presented. Last night during the few minutes I slept, I was haunted by a terrible nightmare. It has quite affected me. I must tell it to someone; poor Tatiana has trouble of her own; moreover, she is so superstitious she would be afraid, and that would make me still more nervous, I might go mad. But I must tell it. Will you hear it? You are not superstitious, and you will tell me what I am to think of it."

"I can tell you that much before you begin. Dismiss ——"

"No, no, first listen to what I have to say.

It is about this woman I have married, I am afraid of her. She is not akin to us, she has no sympathy for me. She hates me, she *hates* me. Do you hear? What do people like these gipsies when they hate anyone? What do we do to those whom we hate? We kill them, that is what she means to do to me. Do you hear? She means to *kill* me. Last night she lay by my side, she was not asleep although her eyes were shut, and I did not think her to be foxing. I sat up in bed looking at her. While sitting so, I fell asleep and dreamed that she was hatching a plot to destroy me. And how do you think this woman hopes to kill me? She knows that these peasants—rude, ignorant fellows—will do anything they believe to be right. She is going to tell them that I am an —— No, I did not dream that. What I dreamt was that I was turned out into the frosty night into the hands of a crowd of these peasants thirsting for my blood, they put an icy cold raw-hide rope round my neck, and fastened me to the back of a sledge. Then they drove out into the forest, and I heard the howling of wolves, and they left me there alone—alone."

He ceased speaking, and sat looking curiously into my face.

“Is that all?”

“Is it not enough? But it was not all; I wanted to escape, but I was fast by reason of the cord round my neck, and then when I cried out in my agony for someone to come and free me, I heard the mocking laughter of the peasants, and I saw that where I was there lay another body too!”

“Did you recognise it?”

“Why do you ask? I recognized it. How strange dreams are! It was no one whom you know. It was a person known to me some years ago, now, alas! dead—*dead*.”

“And your dream ended there?”

“Yes, my dream ended there.”

“And what did you do?”

“I was much frightened, and began to think how I could avoid this terrible fate, when I saw the gipsy woman’s face at my side. She was still awake and she knew how I was suffering. And I thought if I could only kill her, if I could smother her with a pillow, crush her, anything

to be free of her, it would relieve my brain. Why do you look so scared?"

"It is nothing," I replied, "go on with your story."

"Well, I remained like that a long time, until I frightened myself. I really thought I should commit some crime, so I shrieked out for Tatiana, and the gipsy laughingly replied that Tatiana would never come again. Then we began to quarrel, and I became more calm. I always gain greater courage and become composed when I have to wrangle with some one. It is only when people refuse to make any answer that I get excited; I become wild then. But what do you think of my dream?"

"It is simply a dream; an unpleasant one certainly. Perhaps both you and I ate too heartily last evening."

Nalivaete shook his head.

"Tell me what you think of it?" he persisted.

"Well I will think it over, and we will talk about it again this evening; meanwhile we must prepare for the bear hunt."

The sun shone brightly, and out of doors the scene was gay, and I dared to hope that this day's sport would be enjoyable.

Unfortunately it was but a repetition of yesterday's proceedings, with two exceptions; one that Nalivaete shot the bear, and a person who did not introduce himself followed us everywhere, and when I pointed him out to Nalivaete he was much agitated, but gave me no information as to who the stranger might be, nor did he address him in any way, but acted as though he wished to ignore his presence.

This man returned to the house with us, but I lost sight of him among the crowd of domestics in the yard, and although I asked several of the beaters who he was, they declined to answer.

In the hall Tatiana was waiting our return. She advanced gaily to meet me. "Have I to congratulate you upon success to-day?" she asked.

"As yet I have accomplished nothing. Vaska has fallen to your father's rifle, his hand has not yet lost its cunning; we can all congratulate him."

She turned to her father, whose gaze wandered fitfully from object to object, and whose hand trembled like that of one who has sustained a severe shock.

"Has anything happened? My father is quite unnerved. Father, what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, my child. I am getting old, and you know how I have suffered. The excitement of the chase is too much for me."

She gazed pitifully at the man, who, with the help of a servant, was divesting himself of his great over-shoes and sporting accoutrements.

"It is a great bear, my Tatiana, my largest and my last. Let the villagers have a plentiful allowance of *vodka*, and, if you can spare it, give them white bread and *zakouski*. It is only meet that they should celebrate the last bear killed by their master."

"They shall have all, father, but do not talk of this bear being your last!"

"And why not, child? Is it a pleasure to me to shoot a brute like that and suffer as I am suffering? Where is Irma?"

"She will not appear until dinner; to-day, it will be served earlier than usual. Meanwhile shall I play to you?"

The time passed quickly until dinner was announced, and when I left the table I returned to the deserted music room and lay upon the

divan. Soon Nalivaete peered through the half-open door leading from the living room.

Seeing no one but myself he hesitated, then quickly entered, shutting the door behind him.

He was terribly haggard and worn and still trembling.

"I want to ask you," he began, then stopped and his eyes wandered from one object to another.

"About your dream?"

"No, tell me about this person whom you say you saw."

I described his figure as nearly as I could.

"Yes, 'tis he! 'tis he! You saw him, you say?" he gasped.

"I believe so. Do not be alarmed, for I was not in the least dismayed by his appearance."

"No?"

He looked at me questioningly.

"Is that all you saw?"

"That was all."

"That was all then, but you saw that figure before; you noticed its *eyes* in your bedroom last night."

I started.

"I do not remember it," I replied.

"We are alone. Whatever I say to you now is of no value. Why should I not tell you all?"

The man was, I thought, mad, and I did not answer.

"Let me ask you once more. You never saw that figure before?"

"Never!"

"Last night you dreamed. You saw me in your dream? Speak!"

I did not answer.

"Ah! I see that you fear to answer me. You saw me—*kill—my—wife?*"

He bent forward, looking earnestly into my eyes. I thought I saw again that terrible dream drama enacted, and involuntarily I closed my eyes.

"You think it strange that I dare to tell you of my crime. You are a stranger, there are no witnesses to support any statement you may make about me. It is a good thing for me to confess. Therefore I will tell you. How strange you must think it that I can calmly talk to you, can give you—a stranger—every detail of a crime for which I may be called upon to suffer capital punishment?"

"Do not tell me. I do not want to hear any particulars. Go!"

"You shun me?"

"I know all. Go! Go!"

He did not go. He sat there silent, as though pained by my words; then he proceeded to slowly roll a cigarette, while I watched him eagerly, savagely, not knowing what to do, and remaining inactive upon the divan.

He continued to regard my agitation with unmoved curiosity.

"Ah, if you would but hear all the story!"

"Tell it to the priest or to the police, not to me! Do go away!"

"I am braver now than you. I want to tell you all the details, then if you command me I will seek the police or the priest; I do not care!"

"Not now! I will not hear anything now!" and I rushed from the room into the hall.

A servant was hurrying towards Tatiana's apartments; a sledge driver, covered with snow spray and the icicles hanging from his moustache, stood uncovered in the hall.

"Oh, mistress!" I heard the servant call, "our

young lord has been hurt, and has sent for you to go to him at once!"

Tatiana, surprised and frightened, burst into tears, and asked incoherently for particulars.

"What is the matter?" I asked of the driver.

"The young Barin, sir, the betrothed of our mistress, has met with an accident. He is badly injured, and he wishes to see the Barina at once."

"And I dare not leave my father. Say! Is he badly hurt?"

The man turned away his head and replied hoarsely, "I am told, Barina, that he is very badly hurt. He may be dying, and he wishes to see the Barina, if only for a time. He is so good, our young Barin. My lady, do see him, I have driven here fast; my horse is fleet, and I can take you quickly. You may yet be in time to hear something from his lips, and I, Vanka, will be answerable to anyone for your safety."

"I will go." She turned to me. "Promise me that you will not leave my father until I return!"

"And allow you to go alone?"

"That is nothing; I have no fear. My father may be in danger, watch over him until my return. Do you promise?"

“I promise.”

She put on a heavy fur cloak, and I went into the yard and watched her, as, seated by the side of Vanka, she rapidly disappeared across the frozen snow.

I made my way to the music room; Nalivaete lay upon the divan, his eyes open staring vacantly, a freshly-rolled cigarette between his fingers, a melancholy spectacle, and one that I had then no wish to contemplate.

I sat down on my bed and read for a few minutes. Strange noises outside disturbed me. I called for the servants, there was no reply. I went into the hall and called again; all was silent.

I returned to my room and saw peering in through the double-sashed window a human face, horribly ugly and grinning fiendishly. As I stepped towards the window it vanished.

I listened, there was the sound of shuffling feet upon the snow outside, a rasping noise as of wood grating against the wall, then all was still again. I went to the servants' quarters; they were quite deserted; and passing through the music-room I saw that Nalivaete too had disappeared. I sat down there and in a few minutes I heard strange

voices outside. The door of the living-room opened, the face of the man whom I had seen at the bear hunt appeared before me.

I saw nothing but the face, pallid, with glassy eyes and a vacuous expression. I thought I noticed the features slightly relax, then the face disappeared.

I glanced towards the other door, it was ajar, and a face peered through *that* staring saucily at me; at the window was another ugly grinning face, which as soon as I moved vanished. I made my way to the living room. The gipsy woman was there, seated in a low chair.

“Ah! Anglichannin! You want to know what has happened, do you? How do you feel, *batuchka*? Will you drink some coffee? Shall I tell you what is happening? Where shall I begin?”

“At the beginning. Ah, ah, ah! Where is the beginning, *Golubchick*? I don't know, but the end will soon be *here*. It is not yet eight months since I left my people at Arcadia to come here, and what have I not suffered since then, living with this *tcharodi*.”

“A wizard?”

“Krovososs! a vampire! a murderer! phui!”

“What has become of him?” I asked.

“*Chort vosmi!* I don’t know. Hark! Can you not hear the Tcharodi’s dirge?”

I listened, and from far away there came a sound as of voices slowly chanting:—

“Mu—urderer! Sorcerer!
So—orcerer! Mu—urderer!
We have no fear.
Mu—urderer! So—orcerer!

So—orcerer! Mu—urderer!
The end it is near.
Mu—urderer! So—orcerer!
Sorcerer! Mu—urderer!”

Then came the same monotonous dirge, louder, nearer, and sung by many more people. Again and again I heard it, in as many directions.

“What is to be done?”

I looked inquiringly at the gipsy woman.

“We shall escape. All the peasants from ten villages assemble here to put to death the sorcerer of Kertchemskoi. We who have lived with him may escape by purifying ourselves in the approved fashion.”

“And that is?”

“I will not tell you. A gipsy cannot perform it. What is that face at the window?”

Turning round quickly I saw a shadow pass across the window, nothing more.

“It was not a human face nor yet a mask,” muttered the woman, advancing with hesitating steps towards the window.

All outside was silent, and indoors there was no sound except the ticking of a clock and the hissing and crackling of the burning wood in the stove.

“You are not afraid, Irma?” I asked as I followed her to the window.

She replied with a malicious grin. Peering through the steam-covered panes I saw before me the wide expanse of snow on the moorlands, and to the right and left the dark line of the forest. There was no one in the enclosed garden, and the snow appeared to be untrodden round about the house. The moon, screened by a filmy cloud, shed enough light upon the scene for me to distinguish a band of persons approaching the village from the forest, and in the far distance was a solitary sledge apparently at a standstill.

“Do you see yon sledge?” I asked the gipsy.

“Distinctly. It brings the ghostly Vanka to the sorcerer’s home.”

“Is that the epileptic boy whom Tatiana visits?”

The gipsy woman stared at me strangely.

“It is one of the fiends of the sorcerer; others will come.”

I looked at the woman, who was still peering out of the window. With a scream of terror she sprang back, and right before me, a few inches only from my face, was a horrible purple visage, bloated, distorted, half human, half bestial, only its bleared eyes, blinking in at the strongly-lighted room, betokened its earthly nature.

I turned quickly away. The gipsy woman, loudly yelling, had rushed from the apartment, and in her hurry had overturned the lamp, which now lay extinguished upon the floor.

When next I looked towards the window the face—too horrible for any mask—was no longer visible. The hall was in darkness; so, throwing open the door of the stove, the cheery rosy rays from the glowing embers enabled me to find my room and reach down my weapons. I lit my candle and cautiously entered the hall once more,

for I thought I heard the noises of people about the house.

In the semi-darkness I plainly discerned shadows moving swiftly towards the music-room—shadows not of men and women, but of strange creatures having a certain resemblance to the human form, but with horribly disorted features, crooked limbs, and necks askew.

I stood still gazing earnestly at the shadows, then from out the gloom came a raggedly-clad woman with crone-like features and a crooked spine ; her hair, dark and glossy, grew thickly upon her forehead and temples, and was coiled round her large red ears. From the crown and the back of her head, and all down her withered neck, the hair had been scalded, and her parchment-like skin shone with iridescent hues. She held before her a boy of some eighteen years, lean, lank and long, whose horrible contortions she endeavoured in some way to guide, for over his muscleless limbs he seemed unable to exert any control, while he gazed idiotically in whatever direction his eyes were spasmodically rolled, and threw with jerky twitchings his ungainly limbs into meaningless and seemingly impossible attitudes.

The crone, with some difficulty, got the youth in front of the stove, where she permitted him to lie, and where the unhappy being writhed and floundered restless and tormented. Then with uncertain steps she tottered towards me.

I did not advance, and should have kept my gaze fixed upon her had not I felt a tug at my coat sleeve, and, turning round, saw standing at my elbow a monstrosity of frightful magnitude. Upon a short podgy body, bent with infirmities, was a head of enormous size, a bloated visage, bulbous, blue, and beardless—the lips awry and the mouth distorted—for instead of flesh and bone there was nothing but a rank growth of fungoid skin.

Tearing myself away from the trembling hold he had upon my arm, I rushed across the hall and entered Nalivaete's room, closing and locking the door behind me.

V.

TATIANA.

The room was empty. I sat upon the bed expecting an attack, for I knew that an attempt would be made to force open the door, and I heard

the heavy tread of the peasants in the hall and the confused babble of voices—amongst them I thought I could distinguish that of the gipsy woman.

Suddenly a grating noise in the room attracted my attention, and turning towards the corner from which it seemed to proceed I saw Nalivaete staring at me, through a trap-door in the floor.

He beckoned to me and signed me that I was not to speak. I saw as I approached the trap-door that he stood upon the steps of a rude ladder; he descended into the cellar and beckoned to me to follow him. I stood in the darkness upon the earthen floor of this *pogrib*, and he secured the trap-door with strong wooden bars from below.

As I became used to the darkness I noticed a large chest, a common bench, and a huge covered vat almost level with the floor.

“Fetch Tatiana. Tell her that her father wants her help now. We must escape.”

“The house is surrounded by enraged peasants; strange people are in the rooms; it is not easy to escape.”

He pointed to a door in the cellar. “I have thought of all this. Irma must escape, why not you? She has my fleetest horse ready harnessed

to the sledge ; take it, drive to Vorebba, bring back Tatiana quickly."

"But to get the sledge?"

He smiled grimly, and drew from under the bench a large hooded *shoob* lined with white lambs-wool and made of pale cloth. "My wife's!" He unfolded it slowly and placed it on my shoulders. "She lies here," and he placed his hand upon the vat. "They think she walks around the house in this *shoob*, my last present to her ; no one will dare to touch you."

I fastened the garment across my chest, and pulled the hood over my head, it barely reached to my knees ; a pair of light-coloured *valenki* were taken from a corner, and after putting them on I moved to the door.

"See those eyes, they are watching me still," and he pointed to a corner near the extremity of the vat.

"I see nothing," I answered.

"Not so loud ; I see them, but I fear nothing."

I drew the bolt of the door and opened it quietly. I saw the eyes then, gleaming out of the darkness, and dimly outlined was the form of the mysterious man I had seen so frequently that day.

Nalivaete shrieked, pushed me forward, and closed and bolted the door behind me.

The figure of the man retreated along the passage, and groping my way, I followed it.

The passage was a short one ; at the extremity was a door hinged horizontally and opening inwards. The figure opened the door and disappeared ; as quickly as possible I followed, and found myself in a retired corner of the pleasure ground at the rear of the stables.

I walked round to the yard. Forms flit before me as I advance, none approach. In the yard was the black horse with the sledge, the *moujik* who stood at the horse's head ran as I walked towards him, the horse perceiving me reared—seizing the reins, I sprang upon the sledge and drove rapidly from the yard.

The horse was fresh and travelled fast, and we soon reached the woods. I drew my revolver and fired a shot, then two others in quick succession. The horse, terrified, increased his pace, and the snow spray flew from before the runners like sea-foam from the prow of a racing yacht. The horse knew that an effort was expected of him, and continued his wild pace across the moorland and

through the forest ; a wolf, trotting along the track, at our approach hastened into the wood, and an elk gazed with astonishment from the brushwood on the edge of a clearing.

In time we reached a village ; it was apparently deserted. At the further end, however, was a sledge with a horse harnessed thereto, but empty. The horse was steaming and had evidently been driven hard ; the *yemstchik* was standing midway between his sledge and the entrance to the house.

As I drove up, the door of the house opened and Tatiana ran out.

“What is the meaning of this?” she asked angrily. “Why am I brought here? Speak, will you? Fool!”

The man made no reply, and Tatiana going to the sledge, seized the driver’s whip and with it commenced to beat the fellow, who bent to escape the blows, but remained idiotically silent. A peasant had followed her from the house with a lantern and looked unconcernedly upon the scene, until perceiving my approach he cried out, and dropping his lantern ran towards the house.

Tatiana came to me. I spoke to her, and

muttering words I could not hear, she slipped into the sledge and I at once turned the horse towards home.

“It is a catch, a mean, miserable, foolish trick,” she sobbed. “What does it mean?”

I did not answer, but urged on the horse, which seemed unwilling to race homewards.

We were clear of the village and trotting slowly through the forest when she spoke again.

“Where did you leave my father?” she asked.

“In the cellar beneath his room,” I replied.

She started. Then putting her hand upon my arm she looked beseechingly into my face.

“Then you know ——”

“I do not know, but I can guess,” I answered.

The horse ran uneasily, turning first to the right and then to the left, walking at every turn in the road, and at last he came to a standstill and buried his nose in a snow-drift at the side of the track.

“Poor father, I must save him, but how? Hurry the horse along.”

She spoke to him, and the animal moved more gaily.

“Will you help me? Must my poor father

perish body and soul? Is he not mad? He was mad when he committed that terrible crime, and did he not tell you that my brother saw him—my poor half-witted brother? He has never spoken since that time. He will not live with us, but haunts us unceasingly—watches us, follows us to Moscow, St. Petersburg, to Odessa, speaks to no one, looks only at us! It is as though he had taken a vow never to speak again until my father has expiated his crime. And I try to save my father. Am I right in so attempting? I ask myself again and again! He loves me because I try so hard to save him. To save him from that prison, where, living with senseless souls he would lose his own; to save him by imploring him to confess and to seek forgiveness of our Holy Mother. He has committed a crime and must bear the punishment—that he knows, that we know—but is it not right that he should bear the punishment inflicted by God who is just and merciful, rather than that of men who would wreck his life and lose his soul? But what an expiation his is, and how bravely and uncomplainingly he endures! He promised me only yesterday that he would confess to the good priest in Lieschneva, and then he would be

content to die. He bears so much for my sake, thinking that if he gave himself up to the police, as, weary of his terrible lot he has often wished to do, his punishment would have to be borne by me. 'Who,' he asks, 'would wed the daughter of a condemned murderer?'

"And you see the wretched life we lead," she continued sadly. "I cannot sing, but in order that my father's infirmities may not be too closely pried into, I have practised, and by loudly shrieking I have driven curious neighbours from our doors. Soon all must come right, is it not so?"

"I pray that it may," I answered.

"Yes, if father could but know that he is forgiven by God! To feel, to bear the punishment is nothing to the callous prison-hardened criminal working out his sentence. You cannot know what a soul-destroying hell is a Russian prison, and how happy are the evil-doers to work therein and stifle conscience."

She paused. We were now reaching her home and we saw there were several groups of people near it; some carried torches, others had large bundles on their shoulders.

I drove over the fields, round to the back of the

stables, and leaving the sledge, by leaning against the fence of the pleasure-ground forced an entrance.

There were a few peasants grouped on this side of the house, and they moved about unceasingly. I helped Tatiana from the sledge, and we walked stealthily towards the secret doorway.

The windows shone with a lurid glare, and strange shadows moved about in the room.

"They have fired the house," shrieked Tatiana, rushing wildly towards it.

"Tatiana! Tatiana! Save me!"

"I come!" cried Tatiana.

Some of the peasants put out their hands to bar the way, but she eluded them and throwing herself against the hidden door it gave way and she disappeared from sight.

"Anglichannin!" yelled the gipsy woman, recognising me. Then instantly *moujiks* seized my arms, and cutting the reins from our sledge, bound my hands tightly to my side and my feet together.

Tongues of fire were creeping round the windows and eaves, and the peasants who had torches threw them into the house through the broken windows.

Then the gipsy woman went to the passage through which Tatiana had disappeared, and at her command dry brushwood and faggots were placed in the doorway, the straw from our sledge was carried to it and fired; then the peasants brought more faggots and piled them against those which were burning. The flames had now burst through the roof in several places, and issued freely at the windows and doorways; the dry wood crackled as it burnt, and the sparks flew high into the air, and were followed by the broad streaming flames and the long sinuous tongues of fire. We heard cries, but the words were undistinguishable. We knew the prisoners were trying to force their way through the passage, for we saw the faggots near the little doorway shaken and forced outwards. It seemed possible that success would follow one effort, for the bundles of wood fell away suddenly, but the gipsy woman took a long fork from a peasant and pushed the half-burnt faggots further into the doorway, holding it there resolutely until fresh fuel had been heaped around it—then as the heat became unbearable she reluctantly fell back.

The crackling of the blazing shingle, the noise of the burning timber, the bursting of the thick pine logs placed against the walls, and the constant roar of the quickly advancing fire, deadened the cries of the perishing inmates; but all could not drown a shriek that commenced with the supplicants' cry of "Forgive!" and ended in a weird yell of agony. It stopped the wild talking of the excited peasants, and in silence they watched the falling beams and walls or slunk quietly and abashed to their village homes. In an hour's time all that remained as evidence of the tragedy was a heap of smouldering timber, and a few creatures on their knees in the snow, crossing themselves constantly, and praying without ceasing.

Uncle Selwyn.

AFTER a long day of dull tramping in the swashy London streets the poorest home is welcome. That murky November evening I was particularly tired. Saturated with mud and slush, I was anxious to reach my poor lodging, where, if there were not other clothes, I could be rid of my wet, clinging, frayed, and splashed garments—at least for a time.

I was terribly down on my luck, but the result of my tramp was promising for a dinner on the morrow, and I had enough to provide a good supper; for, like all men who eat to live, I had determined upon such substantial fare as can be most cheaply purchased.

I climbed to my garret for the mug and platter, and found Uncle Selwyn seated upon my old sea chest; recognised him by his whisky-laden breath, which dispelled my vision of the grateful and comforting cup and hot-steaming "savoury duck."

My relative was the ne'er-do-well of the family, and rarely visited me save to extort a loan or share my meal.

"What cheer, Selwyn?" I asked.

"Bad news, Willy," he replied gently, and as he was generally boisterous his subdued tone affected me strangely, and I crossed the room for a light so that I might see in what he had changed.

To all appearance he was the same—tall, well-built and wiry, somewhat emaciated, and looking five years older than his age. He had grey whiskers and hair, although he was but forty; he was wretchedly clad as usual with him, for he despised clothes; a battered old bowler hat upon his shaggy head; his moustache was awry and his chin had been shaved, perhaps a week ago.

His cheek bones were prominent, his cheeks red, and his deep, sunken blue eyes were as bright and restless as ever; but there was something more about my uncle, and to discover what it was I regarded him earnestly.

He remained seated upon the chest without speaking until I had finished my scrutiny. I was doubtful as to this man being really my uncle, for as sometimes when you look into the eyes of a

friend you see his soul looking back at you, so now I saw in the dark pupils of my uncle's blue eyes an individuality that was strangely at variance with his character, and I was afraid of *it*. For my brusque-mannered, sottish, but withal kind Uncle Selwyn I never had the slightest fear.

"I suppose it is you, Selwyn?"

"Have I changed so much? What money have you got?"

"Eightpence."

"Four drinks. Willy, my boy, don't spend that money in liquor, however much I may plead or threaten. Now come with me, you are late. We may be too late."

He got up nervously from his seat, raised his hat and put it more jauntily upon his head, and tottered towards the door. I felt impelled to follow him, just as whenever he asked a loan I never withheld it, and we slowly descended the broken stairs.

"Where are you going?" I asked, when we reached the street.

"Over the water. Let us hurry along."

We walked along in silence, threading our way across the busy thoroughfares, and plunging into

the narrower streets and passages which run parallel with them. It was ten o'clock when we reached the Thames, and my uncle declared it was too early to cross.

"Let us take a drink. You have eightpence, and fourpence will be enough for what you have to buy."

"I only brought fourpence. I could not afford to bring all."

The lie satisfied him. We went to the Embankment and sat down.

"Why have you brought me here?" I asked.

He looked at me curiously. "I want your help—your eightpence," and he laughed nervously.

"Will you take it then, and let me return home?"

He seemed hurt at the suggestion. "I will never touch money again, never again," he replied snappishly.

"What is the matter with you, Selwyn?"

He was silent for several minutes, and then commenced to talk about the objects on the river; of his college days at Oxford, and in garrulous fashion recounted his freaks and escapades of ten years ago; to all I listened patiently, ex-

pecting each moment to learn the reason for his call; Uncle Selwyn was not the man to make a friendly visit.

The Embankment was deserted, for fine rain had commenced to fall. It was nearly midnight.

"About Thora, Thora!" he said abruptly, and turned upon the seat so as to face me. "I can never be rid of that woman, the more badly I treat her the closer she sticks to me."

"Where is she now?"

He started. Passing his hand over his brow he commenced to speak gently and in a confidential manner of his relations with Thora. "And the last thing was, eight days ago," he hesitated, "she was ill and could not get from our room, so she gave me her dress to pawn that we might have something to eat, and she has not been out of that room since."

I laughed.

"Yes, an excellent joke, isn't it? Could never get rid of the woman, you know. Good opportunity, thought I, of keeping you indoors now, my lady, and so——" he stopped abruptly.

"There is no one here. Continue."

"So I came round for you to go home with me."

I started up. "How long is it since you saw her?" I gasped.

"I don't know, I never went back. Pawned the rags and spent the money in drinks and a shave, must have a face like a gentleman. But she asked so earnestly that I would buy food that I promised her not to spend the money in drink, she made me swear not to, smiled," he shuddered, "thanked me, and said, 'I trust you, Selwyn, I will watch for you.' She expected me back soon, I led her to suppose that I should not be many minutes, and," he felt his chin musingly, "I suppose that is some days ago."

"I am going now," and I sprang to my feet.

"Where? You do not know where I live, and I am sure I shall not tell you. When the clock has struck twelve I will conduct you."

I expostulated, but all remonstrance was vain, and seating myself by his side I waited anxiously for the stroke of twelve. It came at last, but Uncle Selwyn declared it had struck but eleven. In desperation I dragged him towards the bridge. Seeing that it was practically deserted he dashed across with such speed that it was with difficulty I kept pace with him. We went through dirty

and desolate streets, he sometimes running wildly ahead or hesitatingly creeping with uncertain steps along the dark streets.

We entered an ill-lighted alley, silent, and apparently deserted; it was flanked by lofty buildings, of which the greater number were untenanted. Something was following us, and I looked behind repeatedly, without catching a sight of the person whose persistent tread had attracted my attention.

Uncle Selwyn was frightened, he clutched at my arm convulsively, and started violently at the commonest sounds. We turned into a deserted court, the houses were dilapidated and old; tiles and broken earthenware lay about the yard, and subdued noises from the dismantled tenements disturbed the silence of the night. We heard still those steps following ours, slowly crunching the earthy floor of the unpaved yard. I paused, the sounds ceased; it could but be the echo of our own steps. I led on again more slowly. A figure brushed past us and entered one of the dwellings; a dark, almost shapeless pillar-like form, ill-defined in the semi-darkness of the night, but distinguishable as *something*. It seemed to

glide along and make no noise in treading over the *débris* covered corner of the yard.

"Which way?" I asked of Selwyn.

"Follow *that*," he stammered, again clutching my arm. I did not wonder that he feared to return alone. I paused and looked up at the windows of the building we were to enter; they were all paneless, the frames of some had gone, in a couple there still remained a few fragments of broken glass, but no attempt had been made to fill up the openings with paper or rags. I saw as each landing was reached that a black form passed noiselessly across the window openings—it reached the topmost, a dark mass protruded, remained clearly visible for a few seconds, then disappeared. Through the next window we now saw a face peering—the figure was motionless, and it seemed to be staring fixedly down upon us in the yard. I looked at Uncle Selwyn; the darkness of that corner of the court was so great that I could not distinguish his features, but the light was reflected from his deep sunken eyes, and I saw that he was watching me.

"Lead the way, Selwyn!"

"I dare not!"

"Thora is up there!"

"Who?"

"Thora."

"And what else? The figure of death passes us by; let us go away."

"Come," and I groped forward in the darkness. The stairs were broken, and as we trod upon them the noise of our footsteps reverberated through the house; at the second flight I tripped and fell, and a hundred echoes were awakened in the empty tenements, and answered each other from all sides of the courtyard.

Slowly we made our way to the topmost storey. The doors appeared to be nailed up, as were those of the floors below. Selwyn directed me to a back passage, upon which there was a small door leading to the rooms on our left.

I entered it, followed closely by Selwyn. It was apparently quite empty. I called to "Thora." There was no reply save the hollow-sounding echoes from the various rooms. "In the next garret," muttered Selwyn, pushing me towards a low doorway covered by an old piece of sacking. I tried to strike a match, but the walls and floor were so damp that I could not obtain a light.

We entered the other room. There was a figure at the window, the black something was near it; instinctively I drew back, and Selwyn pulling wildly at my arm forced me through the doorway.

"Did you see it?"

"Thora must be dead," I said vacantly.

"Yes; but that thing, what was it? What does it want here?" His grasp tightened upon my arm, and his face was but a few inches from mine. "See, it is coming this way!" and he pointed to the doorway, where the sacking was still shaking. It seemed to lift slightly, and the dark presence was in our room, between us and the door. Selwyn, in abject fear, was crouching between me and the wall, and we heard distinctly groans and the tramping of feet in the room adjoining.

I lifted Selwyn to his feet, and attempted to drag him towards the door. He released himself from my grasp, and running to the window attempted to leap through. I was able to prevent him, and he became more calm. I succeeded in getting a match to light, and we again raised the sacking. The dark figure was again by the side of the corpse, but disappeared at my approach.

“Thora is dead,” I called to Selwyn. He made no reply, but held the lighted match mechanically on high.

The room was entirely destitute of furniture, and contained not even a bundle of rags or straw to serve as a bed. On the walls were scrawled a few undecipherable characters, which the damp had partly obliterated.

I gave the lights to Selwyn, and moved the body from the window. The figure was terribly emaciated, and had been dead some days. As I placed it upon the floor I saw strange marks upon the naked breast. Selwyn recognised them and cried for mercy. He dropped upon his knees and raised his hands in supplication. The burning match flickered for a moment upon the floor, then left us in darkness, and the presence was with us again. Selwyn shuddered; he did not attempt to move from his knees. The figure advanced, and he fell prone upon his face, and when I had again succeeded in obtaining a light I found that he too was dead.

A Good Intention.

IN ethics, as in most things, Horace Vesey was original; his ideas of right and wrong would not, I fear, be accepted by members of the Ethical Society, but then, as he said, he was ahead of most people. One day, after endeavouring to prove to me that a good intention is not a good intention when it is a paving-block in a certain road no one will willingly tread, he told me the story of a half-finished pen-and-ink sketch I had often examined with curiosity. It was a rough outline of a small factory, possessing numerous windows and far too many very tall chimneys, all smoking as though nuisance inspectors had never been appointed. From the manner in which the factory dwarfed those adjacent to it, to say nothing of churches and huge edifices in the neighbourhood, it had evidently been sketched in accordance with the views its occupier held of its importance. Why such a trumpery production was so highly esteemed by Vesey I had never dared to ask.

“About seven years ago,” he commenced, “I went to the Kyrwick assizes to report for the *Herald*, and Mr. Justice Sterndale was judge. No, it was not *the* occasion, but prior to that, and it is, perhaps, because it was the same judge whose ineptitude wrecked my happiness, and the close association of place and scene with that of *my* life story, that I have never broached the subject I am about to relate, although this story is of itself sad enough to keep.

“Everyone knows that if law is Sterndale’s forte, justice is his foible, and however lenient he may be towards the perpetrators of physical outrage, he is inexorably Draconian whenever the offence is one against morals. It is, of course, the old vice of ‘compounding sins he is inclined to by damning those he has no mind to.’ Hugo Speedy was the counsel in charge of the county prosecutions, and the list was cleared in his best manner ; in fact cases were running almost as rapidly as before a stipendiary magistrate at a police court. A scoundrel who had done his paramour to death, and half-killed the policeman who arrested him, had been found guilty of manslaughter, and allotted twelve months ; then three fellows were put in the dock charged

with dealing in prohibited literature and photographs. The two brothers who dealt in the rubbish pleaded guilty, and urged nothing in extenuation; the third was a cousin, who had coloured some of the prints at eighteen pence a dozen, and had been brought from some other part of the country; he pleaded ignorance of the fact that the pictures were to be offered for sale, and stated that he and his wife and child were starving, and he had to take whatever work he could. This was the opportunity Sterndale needed to prove that the bench was the bulwark of morality. He was, of course, actuated by the highest motives, his intentions were good. So he gave a short lecture on the enormity of the offence, pointed out the sinful purposes to which art could be applied, the wickedness of this debased artist in prostituting his talent in order to make these abominable prints more attractive, and thus his crime was of greater magnitude than that of the others; for without his gaudy work upon them it was doubtful whether there would have been purchasers. Then he unloosed all the stock phrases he keeps for grand occasions, and the poor artist in his threadbare coat drew himself up proudly, and looked back at the judge as a man of

genius stares at a jack-in-office who attempts to coerce him. The soul of the artist was the soul of a man who repudiated the exaggerated notions of the judge, a judge whose speck of humanity was obscured by his intemperate indignation.

“Sterndale does not go express speed for nothing ; the objects of his wrath got two years’ imprisonment each, and the artist a fine of a hundred pounds in addition, and was ordered to be kept in prison until the fine was paid.

“I got the sentence down mechanically, wondering that such a barbarous punishment should be possible ; but if Sterndale imposed it, who would have the temerity to question its validity ?

“There was a sob heard in court ; it came from the artist’s wife. I think I can see her now ; you know the sort of woman a big, burly, black-bearded, callaesthetician would love. A pretty little woman : her features so regular that the face was almost characterless in its beauty ; fair hair in sunny ripples, blue eyes, clear complexion, and a neck Praxiteles would have delighted to copy. A frail, delicate creature withal, and dressed in a poor black gown which everyone could see had again and again been altered to the fashion ; and she

clasped to her arms a four-year-old boy, the noblest-looking and finest-built child I ever saw. Poor lad, he only half understood ; there were tears on his cheeks, yet a smile played about his lips, and he clung timorously to his mother, yet looked defiantly at us. A brave little fellow ! He expected to be danced on his father's knee that night ; that father who could do no wrong, but—who had done what no one on this side of the Channel can attempt with impunity. So a family's happiness was sacrificed to British morality, and a British judge was appeased.

“We were, of course, too busy to trouble more then. Judge and counsel went ahead like clock-work. We had a gang of swindlers next, with forty witnesses to boot, and morality went dungeonwards.

“That night, as I thought the matter over, the pitch to which we had brought jurisprudence did not appear to me to be a high one. Scoundrels with money, who could buy eloquence to plead for them, who could purchase brains and experience to present their misdoings in the most favourable aspect, and actually adduce testimony to their good behaviour, appeared in court to be magnificently virtuous in comparison with the poor artist

and his wretched mates. Moreover, to turn savagely upon the man who had not the necessary guinea with which to purchase a dock defence, then to fine that man a sum impossible to pay, and keep him until it was paid where he could never earn it, was an un-English course which angered me. I determined at the first opportunity to investigate the case; perhaps with a view to 'copy,' for I was very keen in those days.

"In time I found where the man had worked. He shared a shop with an engraver, and I purchased that drawing—unfinished, as he left it when arrested. The little I gave for it the engraver sent on to the wife; then—I forgot all about them for a time.

"About eighteen months after those Kyrwick assizes I went down into the Potteries to write up the lead-poisoning topic. There I met the artist's wife—a wreck. The poor creature had been tempted by the high wages; it was the only employment at which she could earn enough to put anything by for payment of the fine; she worked too hard, too long, and denied herself the necessaries of life; she had saved over thirty pounds, and she was poisoned through and through. I can hardly describe her—a withered, toothless,

ill-shapen creature, with bleared eyes, her face terribly disfigured with crimson patches, lips blue, hair gone, and the finely-shaped hands stained, twisted, and swollen. I asked after her husband. He was still in prison; the last two visiting-days she had not been. 'I would rather he remembered me as I was,' she sobbed. She knew then that she would never see him again; but she still hoped, by sacrificing her life, to earn enough to buy his release. The boy was in the hospital; he had never thriven in the neighbourhood in which they had come to live, and the doctors feared he had a diseased bone. The poor woman furnished all the particulars I required, and I wrote that article as I never wrote but one other. She knew she was to have the payment, and I was pleased the cheque was for a substantial amount. I meant to visit the boy, but I did not. My trouble came—the murder, the trial, and its consequences. In the midst of all some one wrote asking me for pity sake to buy a portrait. I sent the few guineas asked, but did not open the package when it came, nor trouble to read the note of thanks which accompanied it. When I did it was to learn that the wretched woman was too far poisoned to be

employed further, and lived upon her little hoard until death ended her suffering.

“Some years passed. I changed; money more than I could use was mine, but the child had disappeared. I was informed, how you would not understand, that Mr. Justice Sterndale was being troubled; on the bench even he appeared pre-occupied; some one had been known to laugh at him. I tried hard not to notice the information; it was too persistent. Then a man consulted me about the treatment of some hypothetical case. I am pleased it remained hypothetical. It concerned a man of the highest probity, justly esteemed, an excellent liver, and good Christian, who was haunted by faces, horrible faces, but one face which was particularly persistent he seemed to remember, not an ugly face, rather a good-looking one, with dark hair, a bright eye, a noble expression, but with this there appeared always a number of highly-coloured pictures which no right-minded person would describe. It was a terrible haunting. This man of the greatest probity felt that he could not much longer discharge the duties of his high position unless these distracting illusions were stayed.

“No one suspected that the person, who was represented to me as being, if not a Lord Spiritual, some one of equal position, was subject to any hallucination, and notwithstanding the eminent position he had attained by reason of his great ability, no one had ever dared to breathe a word of slander about him. His reputation was like that of Cæsar’s wife, whilst his suffering was greater than that of St. Francis.

“Now the explanation of all this is, that in sentencing the artist to imprisonment beyond hope of release, Mr. Justice Sterndale had committed an error; for the artist had nothing to do but to brood over his lot. His thoughts were of the injustice of his sentence, of the man who had imposed it, and the actions of his own which had led up to the conviction. As time went on and the thoughts remained, or rather grew every time they were recalled to mind—and they were rarely absent—more particularly after the death of the prisoner’s wife—and as they increased in intensity, they became so real as to be perceptible to others than the thinker who originated them. Now brain-pictures or thought-photographs of this description fall upon and drop away from the

properly constituted medium, just as rain drops from a duck's back. But Sterndale was an improperly constituted medium. Instead of the ingress to his conscious self being obtained by way of a will-controlled psychic valve, the impressions reached him owing to a lesion in his psychic structure. And such a lesion results from an ungovernable temper, or senile decay, or a combination of the two, and then the receiver of the impressions is as unable to stop or regulate their flow, as a Swiss guide to stop an avalanche some other guide has started on the peak above him. Sterndale was doomed, and I knew it.

“One day, whilst walking through a drizzling rain, I saw on the pavement a face which, smudged, smeared, and half washed away though it was, I at once recognised. Only one person could have limned it; I knew the artist had been released. I looked for the ‘screever,’ but he had left his pavement pictures and was nowhere to be found. Some weeks after I overtook him in Bayswater; he stooped as he shambled along, and a little fellow limped by his side. At first he resented my enquiries, but we soon got upon good terms; he was half silly, and his hatred of Sterndale was

the only thing which kept him alive. He told me how he had tramped all the way to London, and had hung about the Law Courts for weeks, in order to show his boy 'the man who had killed his mother,' but he had no idea of taking any active revenge. I gave him the portrait of his wife, and tried to persuade him to other courses, but the cruelty of his fate had eaten too far into his nature to be eradicated, until the fierceness of his hate is in some measure appeased by Sterndale's death. I have tried to do something for the boy, but his father will not permit it; poor little fellow, his fate too is sealed; his right leg, I noticed, was fully four inches shorter than his left, his spine is crooked, the joints of his fingers and wrists are permanently enlarged, his face is wizened, his look cruel; not in the least does he resemble the pretty little fellow whom I remember to have seen in the Assize Court; truly a great injustice has been done to him. The fate of Sterndale is worse; the proud, strong man is the prey to the worst fears, his dread of death he hides, and the secret of his hauntings is not known to any but his confidential advisers, who are not likely to betray him; but rather far endure the misery of the cripple

boy than experience the torture of the death-affrighted Sterndale. Nothing in this great city is more painful than to see this poor artist and his crippled son painfully making their way through its crowded streets, impelled and guided by a force they know not, to be where Sterndale can see them. I have found out that the last time the judge went circuit the artist went too, tramping from town to town, and unconsciously appearing just when and where Sterndale least expected him; but the tension is becoming too great, it cannot continue much longer."

And it did not; the figures of the wretched artist and his ruined son had barely become familiar to me, when, a few weeks after I called on Vesey, I saw a miserably clad, unkempt fellow shivering on the doorstep, but on this man's face there was a look I envied.

"*He* won't see anyone," he vouchsafed as I approached, "not any one. Cos for why? See there!" and he pointed to a contents bill carried by a newsboy, and I knew that before many hours should pass columns of type would be prepared for the pæans in praise of the man they hated and in whose death they gloried.

A New Force.

PETER ROBERTSON, by vocation a professional inventor, I have known for some years; he is a natural genius, one of that rare class who can create. This, to me, appears the most god-like of faculties, and its possessor nearer akin to the intelligent cosmos than to common humanity. Peter's father was a farm hand in the North-Country, an ordinary common-place lout, worth his fifteen shillings a week, but not altogether a success when promoted to the position of "hind," with eighteen shillings as his remuneration; his mother a fine, braw, north-country woman, with a lust for work and great capacity for keeping a family of thirteen comfortably clothed, housed, and fed at a total cost of a shilling a head per week. With the exception of Peter the progeny was mediocre; his brothers and sisters are where he left them forty years ago; shepherding, farming and the like, the smartest foys a coble on the Tyne.

Peter commenced work as a rivet-catcher at the age of twelve, afterwards became a boiler-maker at Jarrow, where by sheer hard work he got enough money to buy for himself such books and learning as a marine engineer needs; he went to sea as a donkey-man, and during the long watches studied algebra and geometry in the intervals of engine tending. Then he took to inventing; came to London; worked in a cellar in Soho; brought out all sorts of new things from boot tingles to armour plate. The patent laws and the company promoter swallowed up all Peter's takings, took too his few savings, and at fifty he had to face starvation or go to sea; preferring the latter he soon picked up again, and but for domestic troubles, which had always plagued him sorely, but held back their heaviest trial for his old age and weakness, he would have been fairly happy in the royalties from the minor inventions trade thieves left to him.

He gave me a call one day, when evidently something unusually heavy was pressing upon him.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"I want t' consult ye, Mr. Vesey, about a matter that's causing me a vast o' thinking."

“Thinking only?”

“Aye! joost that.”

“Patent jobbery?”

“Nae, it’s the thing itsel’ that fashes me the noo.”

“Then I am afraid I cannot help you, Peter; the veriest fool can beat me hollow at mechanics and mathematics.”

“It’s nae a question o’ mathematics nae book-learning, or I’d make no trouble on it; it’s the thing itsel’ that’s ayont me.”

“What is the mechanical problem then?”

“It’s nae mechanical problem, it’s a force o’ Nature itsel’ I am losing the grip on, man!”

“What! you have discovered a new force?”

“Joost that.”

“What is it?”

“I div ’na kna’; I div ’na kna’.”

“Perpetual motion, perhaps?”

“Man! D’ye think I’m mad?”

“You are far too clever, Peter; but what have you found? is it—something like electricity?”

“Aye—to luke at.”

“Presumably you have discovered some recondite property of matter——.”

"See here noo, I've na come here to hear talk the like I can get in Great Saint Geordie Street; I've come because ye'r an honest man, Horace Vesey, and it's yer help I want. D'ye mind me this time?"

"Quite seriously."

"Ye kna Scott ha' written in one o' his poems anent the force that cleft Eildon Hills in three——."

"The same that 'curbed the Tweed with a bridge of stone,' and if it is with respect to raising the old Tay Bridge, I am no' engineer to decide as to the possibility of your scheme."

"I said nout about bridges; but the force that cleft Eildon Hills."

"I'm not an authority on explosives."

"But ye ken the magic words; at least I've been told so."

"I am not good at riddles, Peter. What is it you want?"

"As I told ye; there's joost a force o' Nature I was utilising for ordinary mechanical purposes, a practical motor, an' I've lost the grip o' the thing; and it's joost running me the noo."

"Tell me all about it, Peter; steer clear of mechanical terms."

"D'ye mind a time back o' the pneumatic motor?"

"You mean the dodge you had for running the water automatically through the surface condensers, instead of pumping it in and out of the ship?"

"Nae I don't. I mean the wind-driven ketch in which I took ye to Putney."

"I remember the trip; can't say that I remember the motor."

"Well, when I went to sea again I was turning the idea over in my mind one night watch, when we were running from Kertch to the Bosphorus, and it came into my mind like, that if the reservoir of the motor were all made solid, of one piece, without joint or seam, there'd be no leakage from the vacuum."

"You are getting too deep for me."

"Haud thee gob, man! Ye ken y'r mither tongue well enoo. Some time ago I got to work on the same tack, and I had to get a spherical hollow ball without any seam or flaw, and a perfect nat'ral vacuum inside—there's only one way o' getting that."

"I did not know there was one."

"Y've no mind for mechanics. A weel! For

the last hundred years they've rolled hollow tubes from the solid bar, and had a perfect vacuum inside. I changed about the rolls till I got the perfect sphere. T'were hard work for me and my boy Tich, making the model out of iron, and it came to me that a bigger train o' rolls than we could ever afford would be wanted if we were to have a fair-sized sphere. So after a vast o' cogitating I fixed on the alloy we'd use instead o' steel. D'ye know anything about sodium?"

"Only the chloride—common salt." *

"I mean the chemistry o' the metal?"

"Nothing."

"It has very pecooliar properties; it's a sort as though the solid metal had the power o' absorbing a rare quantity o' other solids."

"Like a sponge."

"Aye, a sponge squeezed vera dry, and which instead o' swelling with the water it takes up, gets smaller."

"Hm!"

"Aye. It'll take about one-fourth its bulk o' liquid oxygen, and lose more'n half its size; so when you add 3 and 1 together the sum total is 2; that's a bit unnatural."

“Unusual!”

“Well, the long and short of it is this; I get my sphere, made of what I think is aluminium alloy, I put the tube in without destroying the natural vacuum——”

“How?”

“That’s only a question o’ mechanics, and none so difficult—I fills the charger with—but that ’d be telling—anyway, I fills it, turns on the stop-cock, and the sphere contracts to about two-thirds its size.”

“Yes!”

“Now, how did that come about?”

“Can’t say.”

“Y’ see there was nout in the sphere; I turns on the tap to let the charge in, and straightaway the receiver collapses like a blowed-up ’rubber bag when the wind’s let out.”

“Instead of which something got in the receiver.”

“Joost gas.”

“I understand.”

“So do I now. Well, Tich and I set to, to find out the chemistry o’ that stuff. For surprises, mechanics can’t compare with chemistry.”

“I agree with you.”

“Man, the composition o’ stuff’s an awfu’ mystery.”

“Matter is merely a form of energy.”

“May be. Well, we experimented until I got a stuff which grew just so much smaller and heavier as it swallowed up half its bulk and a fourth of its weight of another metal ; then, when agen a liquid, expanded ; so all y’d to do was joost to pump in and off the liquid, and you had a solid mass of metal beating just like a living heart.”

“Very clever.”

“Eh, but it was what we wanted for the pneumatic motor ! It was joost a bit uncanny from the first, this living lump o’ metal. I cut it through with a slit saw, and it’s joost plain, solid, soft alloy, and it works like a charm. We fixed up the gear o’ the hull of an old yawl, and with a bit o’ a hand crank to work the pump, we ran up and down the river, slack or full, time and again.”

“Then if you have a really practical motor, Peter, I’m right glad of it.”

“Aye, but I’ve nae doon. Man ! but I’m sair perplexed o’ th’ matter.”

“What now ?”

“Aboot a week back I found the pump eccentric

had loosed from the crank shaft, and that Tich and I had been turning and grinding at nowt, for the pump could nae 'a worked for days."

"What difference did that make?"

"Nae difference whatever! When we wanted to go ahead the metal started off abeating and abeating and away we went, and 'gen we wanted to stop, we stopped; the metal's alive, man, and I'm most scared to death wi' it."

I made as thorough examination of the metal and the motor mechanism as Peter would allow, and certainly, if the facts are not exactly as he related them, he has a boat which, without any discoverable cause, is driven ahead or astern at will; and although, on his voyages up and down stream, he has always someone grinding away at a small crank, I, Horace Vesey, have been convinced that such is not necessary to the working of the Robertson motor.

Mysterious Maisie.

DEAR MR. VESEY,—It is very good of you to interest yourself in my behalf in our quest for “Mysterious Maisie”—so we have named the kind creature—and I lose no time in giving you not only all the facts concerning her visits, but many details of my sister’s strange experiences. For the best of reasons I cannot add to the particulars now given; you have the whole story, and nothing extraneous to it, save such slight embellishments as my sister herself has written in her letters and journal, and some explanatory comments by myself to references which would be unintelligible to a stranger.

I will preface the story by stating that my sister Laura was seventeen when our father died; in our straitened circumstances, and with mother’s health failing, it was needful that she should at once earn her living. She was not fitted for teaching, and had she been so, I think my experiences as assistant

mistress of a High School were well enough known to her to act as an efficient repellent from embarking upon a like career. She was accomplished, fond of literature, painted a little, played well, and was of such a kindly disposition that she seemed eminently fitted for the post of companion to an elderly or invalid lady, and we were glad to accept a situation of this kind for her. True it was obtained through an agency, but the references were quite satisfactory, and such enquiries as we could make brought replies which reassured us, and we were confident that Laura would quickly gain the affection of all with whom she came in contact. My sister at that time was *very* pretty; she had a really beautiful face, but she was *petite*, very slight, very fragile; a delicately nurtured child, but full of verve, and not wanting in courage. She was not unduly timorous, nor was she over imaginative, and so truthful in all she said, and honest in all she did, that I accept as actual fact every statement she has made, exaggerated though those accounts may appear, and extraordinary as they undoubtedly are. But to the story. My sister wrote in her journal, under the date of October 22nd, 1889:

“Arrived safely at Willesden Junction at 4.33; after waiting nearly half-an-hour, took the train to ——, reaching that station in less than twenty minutes; took a ‘four-wheeler’ to Miss Mure’s. The streets had a very dingy appearance, —— is a dowdy suburb. Soon we turned down a winding lane, very badly fenced, not many houses in it, they were all old and were built on one side of the road; plenty of trees, nearly all of them bare of leaves. The car stopped in a wider road just out of the lane; the house looks old and badly kept from the outside; it stands back about twelve yards from the road. The garden in front is very badly kept—I have not yet seen that at the back—it is walled in, with iron palisades on the top of the wall, and ivy and other creepers grow over the fence as well as over the house. The front gate is in an iron arch, and was locked. The maid, whose name is Agnes, was a long time answering our appeal; then, when she saw who it was, she went back into the house for the key, so the cabman put my box on the footway, I paid him, and he drove away. I did not at all like the look of the house or the garden, and the cold flagstones with which the walk from the gate to the

front door is paved are very ugly and cheerless. Agnes locked the gate again before we went into the house. In the little hall it was so dark I could not see anything, but when the door was shut, and we opened another leading to the stairs, I felt that the front door was lined with sheet iron. Every time I see such a door I think of the house in which Bill Sikes made his last stand, but I do not want to frighten myself. My room is large ; it has a four-post bedstead with green rep hangings, a chest-upon-chest, an old closed press, and some old-fashioned chairs. The only lights are candles, the window is small, overgrown with a creeper from which the leaves are fast falling, and is barred with five iron bars and some ornamental scroll work. There are very curious prints on the wall, and some designs, which I cannot make out, on the ceiling. In the walls there are three doors, not counting the one in use ; one of those has no bolts, but is locked. I have placed my box against it.

“I have not seen Miss Mure. Agnes tells me she does not wish to see me until to-morrow. I have had tea in the front room downstairs. It is a long, narrow room, with three tall and very narrow

windows looking into the front garden, and a smaller window at the side, by the fire-place, also looking out upon the garden. There is a door leading to the drawing-room, which is at the back of the house. The room seemed to be very dark, but perhaps that was due to the dismal light out of doors, and the thick growth of trees and shrubs in front. When the candles were lit—we have no gas nor lamps—I saw that the room had a papered ceiling, a dirty, cream-coloured ground, with an open floral design in blue. The walls are panelled half way, the upper half is covered with an ornamental net reaching up to the cornice; at the back of the netting the wall is plastered over with canvas, which some time was painted stone colour. There are no pictures in the room. It is not home-like or cosy, and I do not admire the style; but I have never seen anything at all like it before, perhaps it will be better when I am accustomed to it; at present there is an air of mystery about the house and its inmates.

“Since I wrote the above I have had a talk with Agnes. I hope nothing she told me was true. She is a strange woman; but she says she has been here over fourteen years, so I cannot think things are

so bad as she represents them to be. If her idea was to frighten me, she failed; I do not believe her silly tales. At first I was amused at her talk, for she speaks the true cockney dialect, and with a peculiar inflexion, very different to the accent habitual to people of the Midlands. I think Agnes is good-natured, but it was cruel to attempt to frighten me with silly superstitions; she is very ignorant if she does not know that all she said is false. I hope Miss Mure is more enlightened, otherwise my sojourn here will not be pleasant. I judge them to be funny people; they must be eccentric, or they would not keep a crocodile for a pet.

“Agnes says that my room is called the dragon room, from the pattern upon the ceiling. I am to go later into ‘Caduceus,’ but she persuaded Miss Mure to let me have the larger room at first, as being more homelike. I wonder what ‘Caduceus’ is like! There are seven bedrooms—some of them must be very small—and one over the back kitchen; in that Agnes sleeps, and it is reached by different stairs.

“After her silly tales about hauntings, I asked her why she did not keep a dog. She replied that she

had tried several times to get one to stay, but they all ran away. 'They sees 'em, and they won't stop. Why there's Draysen's bull terrier, what'll kill anythin' livin'; when 'e come with the meat one day, I 'ticed him in through the side entrance, and put him in the back garden. He were right savage when I shut the door on him, but 'e no sooner turned round and looked the other way than his tail dropped, and he whined that awful I were glad to let 'im out there and then. But we must ha' summut, so we've got Sivvy.'

"'And what is Sivvy?' I asked.

"For answer, Agnes commenced to explain that Miss Mure is a spiritualist, and constantly attended by a lot of spiritual companions, so that dogs and other animals dread her. At this I laughed heartily. Agnes was not offended, but she said I evidently knew very little of such matters. We were then silent for a few minutes, and I heard mumblings and scratchings. 'Is that Sivvy?' I asked laughingly. 'No,' she replied very seriously, 'they're at it agen,' by they meaning the spirits, I suppose; but after listening she said it was the 'sooterkin,' at which I was, of course, as wise as before. I shall have to enlarge my vocabulary very considerably

before understanding the inmates of this house. Sivvy frightened me much more than any ghost is likely to do. She is a huge crocodile, nearly four feet in length, and she ran, or rather waddled, straight towards me as soon as the door to the kitchen was opened; she hissed the whole time, and sent one of the chairs spinning by a blow from her tail. Agnes had ready a rough and much torn Turkish towel, which she threw over Sivvy's head; the reptile snapped savagely at it, and got its teeth entangled in the threads, and being also blindfolded by the towel, was quiet until Agnes seized its snout with her left hand, and taking its right thigh in her other, lifted it from the floor. It then commenced to lash savagely with its tail, and if Agnes was not badly hurt by the blows, she must be destitute of feeling; but it was only for an instant, for she slipped the reptile into a tank underneath the side-table by the window. She looked hot and flurried when the business was over, but she gave me to understand that the vicious thing was always loose in the outer kitchen, and that I must not presume to pass that way unless she accompanied me. She said also that Sivvy was in and out of the tank in

her kitchen all night ; a significant hint that neither I nor Miss Mure must venture beyond our own quarters after Sivvy's supper time.

"I did not sleep very well last night. Someone was in and out of my room several times, but they did not reply to my challenge, and as they did not molest me, no harm is done. I expect it was Agnes, trying to convince me of the truth of her ghost stories. I saw Miss Mure just after twelve o'clock to-day. She is an ogress. I think she is harmless, for she is nearly blind, but she is dreadful to look upon ; very big, very stout, with a great fat face and tremendous cheeks and neck. She speaks in a very snappy, peremptory manner, but what she has said so far has not been disagreeable. My chief duty it appears is to read to her in the afternoons. We commenced to-day ; she has a large number of books, but they are very old and about many curious things. Some of them are in black letter, which is very hard to read ; some are in Latin, which I can read, but cannot understand. Miss Mure says, so much the better. When she tries to read she has to bring the volume quite close to her nose, and then runs along the line. It must be very trying work for her,

but it is quite comical to see. We finished by reading in a book called *Certaine Secret Wonders of Nature*, and I had to copy out the following description of a monster, for Miss Mure said she knew where there was one just like it, only it was nearly six months old; she seemed very much interested in the description, which she has learned by heart.

“‘Begotten of honourable parents, yet was he most horrible, deformed and fearefull, having his eyes of the colour of fire, his mouth and his nose like to the snoute of an Oxe, wyth an Horne annexed thereunto like the Trumpe of an Elephant; all hys back shagge-hairde like a dogge, and in place where other men be accustomed to have brests, he had two heads of an Ape, hauing above his nauell marked the eies of a cat, and joyned to his knee and armes foure heades of a dog, with a grenning and fearefull countenance. The palmes of his feet and handes were like to those of an Ape; and among the rest he had a taile turning up so high, that the height thereof was half an elle; who after he had lived foure houres died.’

“A fortnight has passed since I last wrote in my journal. I have had two letters from my sister Maggie, and one from mother; both complain that they have not heard from me, save by the note advising my arrival. I have given three letters to Agnes to post for me, to-day I found

them on the dresser in her kitchen. I am not allowed to go out of the house at all; first one excuse and then another is made, but I shall soon see whether or not any attempt will be made to keep me prisoner here. Two people have been at different times to see Miss Mure, but the interviews have been private. There is very little variety in the life we lead, and our reading is confined to the same class of book. I have become quite learned respecting goblin-land. I should know much more if I understood better the Latin books I have to read, but they are printed in such strange type and with so many abbreviations, that I have to concentrate my attention upon the words, not the sense. How different this world to the one about which I used to read, and in which I used to live! This is one peopled by demons, phantoms, vampires, ghouls, boggarts, and nixies. Names of things of which I knew nothing are now so familiar that the creatures themselves appear to have real existence. The *Arabian Nights* are not more fantastic than *our* gospels; and Lemprière would have found ours a more marvellous world to catalogue than the classical mythical to which he devoted his learning. Ours is a world of

luprachaun and clurichaune, deev and cloolie, and through the maze of mystery I have to thread my painful way, now learning how to distinguish oufe from pooka, and nis from pixy; study long screeds upon the doings of effreets and dwergers, or decipher the dwaul of delirious monks who have made homunculi from refuse. Waking or sleeping, the image of some uncouth form is always present to me. What would I not give for a volume by the once despised "A. L. O. E." or prosy Emma Worboise? Talk of the troubles of Winifred Bertram or Jane Eyre, what are they to mine? Talented authoresses do not seem to know that however terrible it may be to have as a neighbour a mad woman in a tower, it is much worse to have to live in a kitchen with a crocodile. This elementary fact has escaped the notice of writers of fiction; the re-statement of it has induced me to reconsider my decision as to the most longed-for book; my choice now is the *Swiss Family Robinson*. In it I have no doubt I should find how to make even the crocodile useful, or how to kill it, which would be still better.

"It is a month to-day since I left home. It seems a year. I am conscious of a great change

in myself; this cooped-up life, the whole of my time passed in the company of people for whom I have no affection, and my thoughts engaged with things to which I have a natural aversion, have altered my character. That this change was desired by my employer I am certain. The atmosphere of mystery and unreality which pervades this house has broken my nerve. The trifling irregularities at which I used to laugh now oppress me; the dream faces, the scrapings, the waving of the bed-curtains, the footsteps and the scurrying, which disturb my rest, I cannot attribute to my imagination. Until a week or so ago I felt strong enough to dismiss them as absurdities, now I do not know what to think. I see strange forms disappearing from the rooms as I enter them; creatures, like to nothing in the heaven above or in the earth beneath, trip across the landing as I mount the stairs to my chamber; small headless beasts creep through the skirting-board on the corridor to hide themselves from my gaze, and these matters now affect me greatly. In the words of Job, 'Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood

up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof.' I am quite in the power of Miss Mure; she takes my hand in hers, and I know not how the time passes, but I feel weak and listless; even the letters from Maggie and mother do not interest me; they are in answer to letters I do not remember to have written. There has been one gathering here for the performance of the rites of the higher mystery. I was present, but I remember very little of them; one great horror excluded all others. A thing they brought here, half human, half—I know not what. I was in the front room downstairs when it arrived. It stood on two splayed feet outside the front gate when I first saw it, and its hand was grasped by a sad-looking, demure little man, with white hair, and wearing large blue spectacles. *Its* face was hidden by a dark silk pocket-handkerchief tucked in under the edge of a heavy cloth cap, and it made uncouth noises, and tugged at the bars of the gate like a wild beast in its cage. At the *séance* we were in semi-darkness; at the table it was placed right opposite me, and the cap and handkerchief were removed—but it would be wicked to describe what was disclosed—neither God nor demon could

have made that horror! Its keeper stood at the back of it, and he had taken from the black hand-bag he carried a short, stiff stick with a pear-shaped end, with which he energetically cudgelled the horror about the elbows when it tried to get across the table to me; apparently the only thing it sought to do. Strange shapes flitted about in the gloom, harsh noises were made, there was some weird chanting and hysterical sobbing; the sooter-kin was brought from its warm-lined hatching-box, and twitched two tentacles sluggishly after the manner of a moribund jelly-fish; but my attention was riveted on the horror before whom I crouched. Since the *séance* I have had more leisure, and have hardly seen Miss Mure, who is engaged in preparations for some other orgie; thus I have time, and now some inclination, to write once more.

“Agnes tells me that I am soon to go into ‘Caduceus,’ a small room at the back of the house. It looks out upon that corner of the garden which is a dense tangle of shrub and bramble. It is at the angle nearest to a low building which has been built on a piece of land cut off from the garden. The building, Agnes says, is the mortuary for this district, and it is only when there are

bodies there that Miss Mure convenes a meeting. The girl who came to the last *séance* and sat at my side is, Agnes informs me, a successful sorceress. Only a short time ago she was robust, stout, and healthy; now she is like a walking corpse, and she draws her strength from those of her acquaintance who do not shun her. If Agnes is to be believed, this Miss Buimbert must be a sort of soul vampire, sucking the spirituality from every person who allows her to approach within range of her influence. I was doubtful whether she was in reality a person or only the phantom of one; it has become so hard to me now to distinguish the actual from the seemingly real. I know that the headless forms and curious creatures which are ever flitting before me, and disappearing at my approach, are but illusions or phantasms conjured by Miss Mure to make an impression upon me, and it is to her that I owe the visitations of intangible visionary monsters who disturb my rest with groans, and make my waking moments horrible by their hideous grimaces and threatening gestures. I know the horror was real, for it had to be admitted by the front gate, and the impress left by its clubbed feet was visible for days on the

clayey side walk outside the entrance gate. The sooterkin is real, for I have touched the brown skin of its boneless body, and seen the impression of its short, flabby, rounded limbs in the soft cotton wool of its bed.

“I know the phantoms cannot harm me, and I pray earnestly for preservation from all ill, and that I may be delivered from this place.

“Why was I brought here? For what unholy purpose am I necessary to these people that they guard me so jealously? Perhaps Agnes may be induced to give me some indication of my fate.

“Three days have passed since I wrote in my journal; an event has happened which has increased the mystery of this place. Yesternight, about ten o'clock, a car drew up at the front gate. I was in the front room and peeped through the blind. As Agnes passed the door to answer the knock she turned the key of the room and made me a prisoner. She admitted three men, and a fourth stood on the flags between the door and the gate. I had ample opportunity for examining him closely. A coarse, ruffianly-looking, burly man, a drover or butcher, or one following some brutalizing calling, I judged, from his appearance

and his manner whilst standing and walking. Dark hair, a short beard, and a raucous voice. After admitting the men Agnes went hurriedly to her kitchen, and locked and barred the door, and soon I heard the hiss and the clattering of furniture which followed 'Sivvy's' entrance into the front kitchen.

"The three men went upstairs, and in a few moments the stillness of the house was broken by the shrill shrieks of a female; the screams were accompanied by sounds as of a scuffle and overturned furniture, then the noise partly subsided, but the struggle had not ceased. I heard the heavy breathing of the men, and seemed to see the efforts made by the woman they were dragging to the stairs. There were gasps and short cries as they brought her downstairs, and a short but sharp struggle in the hall. Then the burly man stepped within, and soon the four re-appeared in front, half carrying half dragging a struggling woman. Her light hair flew in disorder, as she twisted and bent to free herself. It was with difficulty they forced her into the car, and I saw her arms waving in helplessness as the captors endeavoured to enter the vehicle. I saw, too, that something had been

tied over her mouth, and the last thing I noticed on her thin forearm, from which the dress had been torn, was a freshly-made scratch two or more inches in length, from which the blood was still trickling. Three of the men, including the burly drover, having entered the vehicle, the fourth rang our bell, then mounted the seat by the driver, and as they drove away I saw them pulling down the blinds to the windows of the car.

“Agnes went out at once and locked the gate, then bolted and barred the door and came to me. She appeared to have been drinking heavily, and answered my earnestly-put questions in an incoherent manner. If I am to believe her there have been several girls engaged at different times as companions to Miss Mure, and none of them have escaped; some have died, others have been taken away after residing here a long time. What am I to do? I will see Miss Mure to-morrow and demand some explanation of what I have seen and heard; and I have told Agnes to tell Miss Mure when she first sees her to-morrow that I must have an interview.

“I did not sleep at all last night, for I could not dismiss from my mind the scene I had witnessed,

and what with speculating upon the fate of the unhappy creature forcibly taken away, and forebodings of ill to myself, I passed a most wretched time.

“Somewhat to my surprise Miss Mure expressed her willingness to see me at once. She was at breakfast when I entered her bedroom, feeling very nervous, and not quite knowing what to say. I told her that I did not like the place, and wished to go home; that she had no confidence in me, and did not even let me know who were the inmates of the house. To this she replied that she was sorry that I was not comfortable, that Agnes should have instructions to give me greater attention, and that any delicacy I might express a liking for should be obtained for me. As to not knowing who were the inmates of the house, she could not understand to whom I referred. No one was there, or had been there, but herself, myself, and Agnes. When I told her of what I had seen, she said it was all imagination; she knew nothing of anyone having been there, and surely she would have heard had there been any such struggle as I described. I told her that the footprints on the footway outside the gate, and

the marks of the carriage wheels, were still to be seen distinctly, so that I was sure I had not deceived myself. She said it was cruel of me to mention such evidence, as I knew she was so afflicted that she could not see the marks herself; and even were the marks there, as I said, she was not responsible, for they were not upon her premises, and what people did outside our gates was beyond our control. The neighbourhood had greatly deteriorated since she first resided there. Had they not forced her to give up the most delightful portion of the garden for the erection of a public mortuary? A thing which so incensed her that she had entirely neglected the 'beautiful pleasure grounds' since, and allowed the gardens to run wild, for she never used them now, and she only hoped that the authorities would allow her to enjoy possession of her house unmolested for the few years that remained to her. Then I complained of the crocodile. To this the answer was that I need not go near it. Siva—that is its correct name—was to be kept in the kitchen; it was a strange pet, but Agnes wished to keep it, and as long as she kept it in her own quarters she was to be allowed to do so. If it was once found in any

other part of the house it was to go; Agnes knew that, and I need not fear that it would be allowed to pass the threshold of the kitchen. Then I said that I did not like the 'horror,' and I could not, and would not, stay if it ever came again. She replied that it was impertinent of me to attempt to dictate to her as to whom she should or should not invite as guests to her house, and that she would not submit to my dictation; no harm had been done to me, I had experienced no rudeness, and she was sure that none of her acquaintance would insult me. I then told her that I had heard that none of the persons who had previously filled the post I occupied had received any wages; that I was too poor to stay there if not paid, and that my only object on leaving home was to earn something to help to support my mother, as my sister's salary was insufficient, and that I should be pleased to be able to send them something at at once. She listened in silence, but veritably stormed her reply. I had been listening to 'idle kitchen tales,' for she always paid when the money was due, my first quarter's salary was not payable until Christmas. I should have it then, unless she sent me about my business before, and she would

like to know if there were any other preposterous claims I wished to make. To this I replied somewhat hotly that I had not made any preposterous claims, that I had simply asked for an advance of money as a favour and for the purpose I stated ; that I certainly did wish for greater liberty ; that I had never been outside the door since the day I came, that I wanted greater freedom for writing and posting my letters, and that I could not consent to remain in her service unless she showed greater confidence in me, and informed of the object she had in view when compelling my attendance at such meetings as the *séance* at which I had assisted. She said that she was pleased that I had spoken out boldly, for she now felt no diffidence in making our relative positions plain to me. She wished me to remember that she stood *in loco parentis*, and therefore could not allow me to wander about alone, for the neighbourhood was not one of the kind in which a young girl could do so with impunity. But I was not to imagine that it was by her wish that I was confined to the premises. On fitting occasions, and as opportunities offered, we should drive and walk out together. As to the writing of letters I was, and

always had been, quite free to write when I liked and whatever I wished to either my mother or my sister, and so far from having tampered with my correspondence she was only too pleased to know that my letters had been delivered to me personally by the postman. I sadly mistrusted her, but she was sure it was because I did not know her sufficiently well, and as proof of the kindly interest she took in my welfare, and that of my mother and sister, she would be pleased to advance me, there and then, five pounds on account of my first quarter's salary if I would undertake to send it at once, writing only a few lines to say why it had been sent, and in her presence putting the money in the envelope, sealing it and taking it directly to the gate, and giving it to any boy who might be playing in the locality to post in the letter box which we could see about a hundred yards distant. She knew it must be tiresome to a young girl to have no companions but Agnes, so, if my mother was agreeable, I might at Christmas spend a few days with friends in London; or, if that could not be arranged, I might invite anyone to spend some time with me in her house; she would always be ready to grant me facilities to

receive or visit any friend of whom my mother might approve. As to the object of her studies and work, she was gratified that I showed any interest in them. I was possessed of sufficient intelligence, she thought, to form some idea of her work from the books I had read to her. She was engaged in researches of a kind not understood by many, and she admitted that the methods it was necessary to adopt were not always pleasant; indeed they were viewed with such suspicion by the authorities that it was advisable to work in secret, or at anyrate in such a manner as would excite but little suspicion. She concluded, 'I liked you, dear, from the time I first saw your portrait, and I hope some day you will be an earnest worker in the cause to which I have devoted my life.'

"I made haste to apologise fully, and gladly availed myself of her offer to make the remittance. I thought how pleased dear mother and Maggie would be to receive my first earnings, and I took the five sovereigns to Agnes to get changed into a note by one of the tradesmen. Then I wrote my letter, and submitted it to Miss Mure, who at once approved it, though it took her some time to read

it. When Agnes brought up the note I took the number and date, at Miss Mure's suggestion, and also the name of the last owner, 'H. Fletcher,' scrawled on the back, and stated them upon the receipt I gave her; then in her presence and in that of Agnes I put the note and the letter in the envelope, sealed it with black wax, and at once went with Agnes to the front gate to find a boy to post it. At Miss Mure's suggestion we stayed there, and watched him take it to and drop it in the box, then gave him another penny when he came back. I never was so pleased as when I saw the boy drop the letter in. I felt quite content to remain with Miss Mure, and I told Agnes so. She did not say anything. I added that though we had no friends in London, a friend of mine had, and no doubt I should have an invitation from them, and leave for a few days at Christmas. 'Oh no, you won't!' said Agnes. 'I've been here fourteen year last Febry, and it ain't the fust time I've seen this trick played. Don't I remember poor Miss Jo? Why, 'er stood here just as you, and talked about goin' 'ome in a fortnight; but 'er war took bad and died; and 'er went 'ome from the mortrey, 'er did. The

missis ain't never so dangerous as when her's nice, that's it, miss. It ain't her fault, but I'm sorry for yer, I am.'

"No sooner were we back in the house than Miss Mure called me. I hastened to her, and she held out to me the note I had sent in the letter, and laughingly asked me why I had forgotten to enclose it. There it was, the number and the name both corresponded with those I had taken of the one I was sure I had enclosed to mother. 'Have you sent the real note or only t'he phantom?' she asked. I was too confused to reply. 'Well, we will wait until we hear from your home,' she said with a smile, and motioned me to leave the room.

"I have had a long talk with Agnes; she refused to say anything about the event of the other evening, but says I shall 'see what I shall see.' I cannot make out at all what became of the other girls; but as to my fate, Agnes makes no secret of what she believes is in store for me. 'If I was you, miss, I should pray. I should; it can't do no harm to you, and it'll make yer 'appy. Why don't I pray? It ain't much use prayin' when the copper 'ave 'is 'and on yer shoulder, is

it? I hadn't oughter come 'ere, I 'adn't. If I'd gone to quod it'd only been for life at the wust. But Agnes Coley'd had one taste, and her d'ain't want two, so 'er chivvied the beak, and 'as 'er liberty—livin' alone in a cellar with a bloomin' crocerdile, that's what 'er's doin'.'

"'But I have not "chivvied the beak," and I am here,' I argued.

"'Course yer 'aven't. It's yer fate, that's all. You won't be here for a couple o' bloomin' stretches fightin' for yer livin' with a stinkin' crocerdile. You'll be a hangel long afore that.'

"'But, Agnes, tell me why must I be an angel? If what you tell me is true, I do not think poor Miss Mure and her friends want angels, they seem to choose such very opposite characters for their acquaintance.'

"'Look 'ere, miss, 't ain't that missis wants yer to become a hangel; yer'll become a hangel 'cause it's yer nature.'

"'I do not understand you.'

"'Well, see 'ere. S'pose—only s'pose a' course—s'pose that there thing yer call the 'orror were to come here, and be put in "Salymandy," and you in "Caduceus," with only a bit a' tishy paper

a dividin' yer room from his'n. Don't yer think yer'd soon be a hangel thin?'

"I shuddered.

"'Yer'd better pray, miss; though it ain't for the likes o' me to tell *you* to pray—if I'd a pray'd for fourteen year instead o' carryin' on as I've been doin'—but there, it ain't no use cryin' over spilt milk.'

"'But why should the horror be brought here at all?'

"'You ask that? Well, I should 'ave thought you'd a knowed. There was poor Miss Jo, a nice girl she was, and she used to tell me that what the hinner cercle was after was the makin' o' summat different to 'omunclusses, and as how, when all things was properishus, they'd try agen and agen until they did get somethin' fresh. We was great in mandrakes in them days, miss, and some hawful things I've seen in this house. Poor Miss Jo, 'er *was* a dear good girl, just like yerself; but I found her 'alf dead in Caduceus, and the dwerger what used to be here ain't been nigh since that. You do put me in mind o' Miss Jo, miss, you do.'

"I did not quite understand Agnes at first, but

soon the import of much I had read to Miss Mure seemed clear to me.

“You pretend to like me, Agnes, I said. Why did you not help Miss Jo, if you liked her as you say you did?”

“‘That’s it, miss, I ain’t no good. When the times is properishus I could no more stir a finger to help yer than Sivvy could if yer tumbled in a vat o’ bilin’ oil.’

“‘Then if you believe that, and wish to help me, let me escape from here at oncc.’ I clung to her arm, for I felt a fear I had never before experienced.

“‘No, miss, that wouldn’t save yer, and it’d be worse than death to me. I ’an’t live ’ere fourteen year for nothin’. I’ve ’eard all that before. Yer a brave girl, you are, braver than Miss Jo, but I s’pose it’ll be the same with you as with the rest.’

“We were silent for some time.

“‘Agnes, will you tell me — will you let me know—if that thing ever comes here again?’

“‘I can’t promise, miss.’

“‘If only I could get a few days I could escape,’ I said in despair.

“No, yer couldn't. There was that Miss Van-over who got out of a Russian prison, trying for months to escape from 'ere, and 'er never could. Besides, 'ow do you know 'e ain't here now? What would you do if you met 'im on the stairs to-night?’

“I screamed.

“‘Be quiet, or I'll let Sivvy in. You'd better go to bed now.’

“‘Oh, do help me, Agnes!’ I pleaded.

“‘And 'aven't I helped yer? 'Aven't I warned yer of yer fate? Ain't it because I like you I've told yer what I 'ave? You do what I told you.’

“I came upstairs, and have written, and now feel more trustful. Surely mother's prayers will avail with the good God, and His angels will guard me.

“I slept soundly that night, but the last two days my terror has increased. I notice just those indications of a forthcoming meeting which immediately preceded the last *séance*, and the passages we have read in the books of magic have prepared me for the attempt which I feel certain will be made. Agnes has taken me, for the first

time, into 'Caduceus,' and shewn me the window bars which were bent by Miss Jo in her frantic endeavours to escape, and I have peeped into the adjoining cupboard, 'Salamander,' which is arranged more like a stall for a beast than a bedroom for a human creature. It is divided by the flimsiest of partitions from 'Caduceus,' and there is a door communicating which *I* could easily break down. I have a letter from mother acknowledging the receipt of my remittance,* and containing some words of encouragement which I shall lay to heart. I showed the letter to Miss Mure, and read it to her. She smiled and said she hoped I was now satisfied. Unfortunately I am not.

"Last night I sustained another shock. I was again in that downstairs room where I spend so much of my time, fearing to see that horror once more, yet always on the lookout for it; it would be still worse if it came into the house unknown to me. A two-wheeled cart of funny shape, like that used for delivering pianofortes, stopped at the gate. Four men were on it. I recognised the tread of one at once, he was the burly, butcher-like

* No money was received and no acknowledgment sent.—
MAGGIE GLEIG.

man who had waited on the flags when the woman was dragged away. I was again locked in the room by Agnes, who however did not retreat to her kitchen, but fetched lights, and the men brought from the vehicle a large coffin. Their burden seemed heavy. They spoke in low whispers, and once inside the house the door was shut. Then they conveyed the coffin upstairs, and I heard their irregular tramp across the landing. From the manner in which the coffin was handled I knew that it was not empty.

“Did it contain the corpse of the woman whom less than a week ago I had seen forcibly dragged from the house? Or was it intended for me? Did it contain the living horror, smuggled thus into the house so that I should not know of its coming?”

“The men were not long upstairs, and soon descended and drove away. Agnes went straight to her kitchen without unfastening the door of the room in which I was. I called and knocked, but obtained no reply.

“It was nearly midnight when the door communicating with the drawing-room opened, and Miss Mure beckoned to me to follow her. We

went upstairs, and she told me that my room had been changed. I was to sleep henceforth in 'Caduccus,' whither my things had already been conveyed.

"She showed me into the room, and left me there with less than a half inch of candle, locking the door upon me. I at once attempted to barricade the flimsy door which divided my room from the 'pen,' but the result was unsatisfactory. Then I looked for my Bible, but none of my books appeared to have been brought into the room. It did not take long to search the small apartment, and my things were so few that the books must have been left behind purposely. There was no bedstead in the room, but in its place was a long settle like a boxed-in bath or water cistern, and on the top of this a straw mattress was laid and the bed made; a long curtain, hanging over a pole swung above the middle of the bed in the French fashion, hid the want of a bedstead. Suddenly it occurred to me that the coffin had been placed in the locker under my bed. For some minutes I was too frightened at the thought to do more than stare blankly at the bed. When I commenced to lift up

the palliase the candle gave a warning flicker, and I was in utter darkness before I could make even a cursory examination of the locker. Left without light and with the apartment in disorder, I sat in a half dazed condition on the first chair into which I could drop; straining my eyes to see further into the darkness and my ears to catch a sound from the next room. In a short time I succeeded in frightening myself completely. I heard, or thought I heard, the peculiar grunting of the horror, and I flung myself against the door from my room, hoping to break it down, but the effort was useless, and I again sank helplessly into the chair. It was whilst listening breathlessly for the sounds I so well remembered, that my attention was distracted by a sigh, as the sougling of the wind, from the box bed before me. I looked in that direction, and in the pitchy blackness saw a bright white figure, first its head projecting through the lid of the box, or the bottom of the bed, then slowly it arose—a corpse fully dressed out in its grave clothes, with livid face, fallen jaw, and wide-open glassy eyes staring vacantly before it. Very many strange things I had seen since staying at Miss Mure's, but no spectre so struck me with terror as

did this one. I felt that I could not stay there with it. I sprang up, and whilst my gaze was riveted upon it fell back towards the door of 'Salamander' and groped for the fastenings. The door yielded to my pressure, and scrambling over my box I entered the little pen or cupboard, which was associated in my mind with the thing I most dreaded. In the delirium of terror I felt that I must reach Agnes, but I had sufficient sense to clutch at the bed coverlet as I escaped from my room. The door from 'Salamander' was unlocked, and without stopping to think I sped along the corridor and hurried downstairs, groping my way more slowly in the less known hall and passages leading to the kitchen. The door had no lock—in this very old part of the house a drop latch was the only fastening—and by working away perseveringly the stop peg Agnes stuck in above the latch would drop out. I knew Siva would be near, and had the coverlet ready to throw over her, but when I gently opened the door and peered in I saw Siva was perched half on a chair and half on the kitchen table still and dumb, whilst before the fire there stood the figure of a man from whom the skin had been removed. It was like an

anatomical figure designed to show the muscles ; its grinning face, prominent teeth, and colourless scalp were doubly horrible in the glow of the dying fire. As it turned its head to look at me the last spark of hope died in my heart, and with a loud scream I fell forward on the floor and fainted.

“When I recovered consciousness I was again on the bed in ‘Caduceus.’ The light of a foggy morning showed that the room was empty, and some untouched breakfast was on a tray by my bedside. Was the adventure of last night a dream or a reality ?

“I arose and went at once downstairs and wrote up my journal. When I went there again, in the dusk of the early evening, a young woman was sitting in an obscure corner ; I bowed to her, and took up my accustomed position at the front window. She crossed over to me, and sat by my side. I felt pleased that she did so, and soon we commenced a conversation. I learned that her name was Maisie, and she told me that she understood my fears, and that in time I should be free of them. Her face seemed familiar, her voice was sweet, and manner gentle and subdued. I could

learn nothing concerning Miss Mure, and Maisie told me that she could never see me in her presence, but she would be in that room frequently, and possibly she could come to me occasionally in my new room.

“I told her of my dread of that room, and of the great fear I entertained that the cupboard next to it would be tenanted by the creature who was sometimes brought there. She told me it was wrong to anticipate trouble, the danger was less real than I imagined. I spoke of what I had seen from that window, and she shuddered when I described the struggles of the woman who had been dragged away. I commenced to tell her of what I had seen brought back the night before, but she prevented me with an impatient gesture. I dropped the subject, but soon the thoughts which were uppermost in my mind were again the topic of my tale, and I told her of the spectre I had seen arise from beneath my bed. She arose abruptly, and, with a sad wave of the hand, left the room by the door leading to the passage. I remained there musing, and hoping that she would soon return. The darkness and loneliness became oppressive. I sought Agnes, but I dared not speak to her of

Maisie, and as we had little to say to each other, she went to bed early.

“That night I barely slept at all, the remembrance of my adventures the night before, or the too vivid nature of my dream, prevented slumber. I may have dozed several times, but I had no sleep until daylight broke, when I fell into a troubled slumber. When in the afternoon I again entered the downstairs room Maisie was there. Her presence cheered me; she said but little, and all too soon she went. I am pleased with the companionship of Maisie; sometimes I find her in my bedroom, but there she is always more sad than when downstairs, and I barely notice her coming and going. She glides in and out as a ghost might. My manner, likely enough, is the same. To-day, when I looked in the mirror, I was horrified at my appearance. My face is pallid as death, and set in its frame of hay-coloured hair, and with two violet eyes shining like burning coals, I doubt whether it would not frighten a visitor as much as any real spectre could do.

“Something tells me I am not long for this world; I think of mother and Maggie, and burst into tears. They will miss me. If it were not

for them I think I should like to be at rest ; but when I think about it ‘ a strange perplexity creeps coldly on me, like a fear to die.’ I have talked about this to Maisie, and she answered peremptorily that I must not die here. ‘ You know not what it means to die in this place.’ I looked at her earnestly. Was she real ? The words of Dryden came imperatively into my mind—

“ ‘ Oh ! ’t is a fearful thing to be no more.
Or if it be, to wander after death ;
To walk, as spirits do, in brakes all day ;
And when the darkness comes, to glide in paths
That lead to graves ; and in the silent vault,
Where lies your own pale shroud, to hover o’er it,
Striving to enter your forbidden corpse.’ ”

“ I looked tearfully at Maisie ; she did not reply, but her face was ineffably sad. As I cried piteously, ‘ Oh, Maisie ! Maisie ! ’ she left the room hastily.

“ I saw her again when I went to my room ; her face was still troubled, but she drew me towards her affectionately, and we talked together for a long time of love, and trust, and of beauty. The pale moonlight shone into the room, and by its faint glimmer Maisie’s face seemed truly beautiful ; but for the first time I noticed that her hands were

coarse, and that upon the wrist of one there was the scratch I had seen on the arm of the woman who had been dragged from the house on that terrible evening a fortnight ago. She smiled when she saw that I noticed the scar, but offered no explanation. It seemed to alter the thread of our discourse, for she talked to me of my position in the house, of the heavy work *she* had to do on the morrow. It would be best for me to go, if I really wished. I told her how I dreaded the next meeting, and how anxious I was to escape. For some minutes she was silent; she then said it would be hard to part from me, but to-morrow, if I would trust her, she would show me how to escape. I was to follow her in silence, soon after midnight, and must promise not to speak to her. I expressed my readiness to do all that she wished, and commenced at once to think out my plans for getting my things together in readiness. She said that she was tired, and with my permission would rest for a time on my bed. She lay down, and after looking at her for a time I turned away and watched the moon and the slowly-floating clouds. I must have dozed, for when I again looked for her I found that she had disappeared.

“When I awoke in the morning it was already late, but I should have slept on had not the noise of strange footsteps on the landing disturbed me. I dressed hastily, and upon leaving my room was in time to see two men dragging the coffin from under my bed through a door in the wooden partition which divided the room from the landing. I waited and saw that it was taken to the *séance* room.

“Agnes has been in a very bad temper all day. Siva has been thrust out into the garden, and lurks about in the bushes. The house has been reeking with strange odours, and the preparations for the meeting to-night are now completed. I do so hope Maisie will not fail me, and that I shall leave this house to-night for ever. I have not seen Miss Mure, nor did I expect to. Maisie has not been here, and I am waiting patiently at the window, looking out for the arrival of that most fearful of all things which attends the meeting of the black magicians. I feel that if I see it again I shall never more write in this, my journal. It is at the gate, gripped tightly by the old man with blue spectacles. Adieu!

* * * * *

“EAST SHEEN,

“December 14th.

“DEAREST MOTHER,—Mr. Frank’s telegram has informed you that I have left Miss Mure’s. That the why and wherefore of my conduct may be understood without inconvenient explanations by word of mouth when I see you, I send you the journal I have kept since I went there, and when I tell you that I have promised one to whom I owe my life that I will never speak of my experiences while with those dreadful people, I know that both Maggie and yourself will accept this account as final, and so far complete as I am able to make it. . . . At the *séance* I was pleased to see Maisie sitting opposite me in the seat which the horror had occupied on the last occasion. On the table between us was the coffin, open, and containing Maisie herself. The other Maisie, the living one, smiled at me as she saw my wondering face. The monster still had its face covered, and was tolerably still. I kept my gaze fixed upon Maisie during the performance of the preliminary rites. Later, when the face of the horror was uncovered, it whined piteously, and moved about the room as a ferret which has escaped from a rat-hole, sniffing and creeping, but avoiding the seat on which Maisie sat, and towards which it was evident its keeper wished to direct it. Then it clambered on to the table, and threw itself upon the body in the coffin. Maisie at once arose, and crossing to where I was gazing in the stupefaction

of fascination upon the horror, she touched me lightly on the shoulder, and I turned and followed her from the room. We went downstairs and through the kitchens, then along an old, little-used passage leading to a stable-yard. In this there was a door locked from the inside, the key still in the lock. Maisie indicated that I was to open the door, and we passed out into a passage leading to the pathway by the mortuary. We were free. She then made me promise never to speak of what had happened to me, and told me to hasten towards town. I looked behind me, and saw her pale, wistful face still watching me. How I reached here I can tell you fully. It was all so strange. In the thick London fog the men and creatures all loomed upon me suddenly, and took seemingly strange shapes. I became frightened, but struggled on to the address I had determined to reach. More I will never tell until Maisie shall have released me from the promise I made."

* * * * *

Nothing has shaken my sister's resolution. Miss Mure has now left the house, and resides with a relative. Agnes, we learned, has joined her friends in Australia. Whether the mystery is fact or fiction I may never know, but my sister is often strangely affected since her return to us.

She starts in her sleep, is often found weeping, is timorous, and will not be alone after dusk. Even when she is with us, and we are as merry as we know how to be, her face will suddenly become clouded, and she will shrink as though some great horror were before her, and ofttimes she will raise her hands as though to screen from view something which terrifies her, and sends her sobbing to mother or myself.

The Face of Nature.

THE other day a man who gave the name of Vigleik Mekke called upon me. He was a Finn who had for some years been resident in South America, and was on his way home from Bogota to Uleaborg. He said that his object was to learn of me how he could see into the soul of things. As, from his conversation, I judged him to be a fairly successful psychometrist, the question seemed an idle one. But I had not rightly understood the broken English in which he spoke; what he wished was to look upon the face of nature as a whole—in mystic jargon, upon the Macrocosm.

The psychometrist is to the true mystic much the same as the geologist to the inspired poet; he obtains some knowledge of results, but an inadequate idea of causes, even in his own field, which is the microcosm. By investigation the geologist may understand the formation of a par-

ticular stratum, of several, or many strata, even comprehend a mountain range, but will need genius to idealise the formation of a continent. The powers and learning which constitute a competent mineralogist do not avail when he leaves the study of microcosm to conceive the composition of the macrocosm. Assuming the planet earth is alive—they who do not believe that it is so may possibly imagine so little—that it possesses huge vital organs, these organs of the same composition, roughly, as that of the earth's crust, and that, by some means, the earth shall be pierced through its centre, and the fragments from the boring submitted to geologists, to the most learned of the students of the microcosm. Is it likely that they will learn more of the earth's *organic* structure than they can from investigation of the surface? The investigators would be of the same nature as

“ He, who with pocket hammer smites the edge
Of luckless rocks, detailing by the stroke
A chip or splinter to resolve his doubts ;
And, with that ready answer satisfied,
The substance classes by some barbarous name,
And hurries on.”

Wordsworth adds, "Doubtless wiser than before"; but in that I cannot wholly agree. The knowledge obtained would be of a similar kind to that already possessed, and though it might lead to a different classification and arrangement of the facts of geology, an epoch-marking revolution in the history of physical science, the real result would be no greater than one which should cause people to give new names to all books, turn them the other way round on the shelves, and evermore read their newspapers upside down.

For me personally the study of fragments, and the investigation of past events, possess no attraction. As Vigleik Mekke stated it: "I want a bird's-eye view of futurity." To obtain a bird's-eye view you must not only reach the altitude at which it is possible, but when there must not concentrate the sight upon any particular object, but allow all within range to focus upon you. No longer observe the microcosm, allow the macrocosm to manifest itself. All created things may be ascertained by those who have the ability to interpret the perceptions created things produce. The psychic power necessary to effect the interpretation of a sensation into a cognition, or idea

of the thing which produced the sensation, varies with individuals. Mekke undoubtedly possesses greater psychic force than most men. He is also well developed mentally, that is to say, knows how to utilise his perceptions. For instance, his plan had been as follows:—Whilst making geological investigations, he was puzzled by observing large heaps of loose stones and boulders upon mountain tops where they could not have been deposited by glaciers, and where there were positive proofs that they were not what are termed "outcrop." Testing them psychometrically, he *saw* that they had been gathered together artificially, though by what, or whom, he could not see. Nevertheless, he was aware that there were near them huge crustaceans some ten or more feet in height, in shape very much like human creatures, but neckless, and with heads, like those of crabs, low down between their shoulders. These amphibious creatures lived on the fringe of the then forming glaciers, and waged war upon other creatures, which sheltered themselves behind walls of loosely-piled rocks, the ruins of which were the collections of stones which had puzzled him as geologist. Prior to that period in the world's history

the atmosphere had been much more dense, even then it was much denser than now; these creatures, who had left but the faintest psychometric trace, had developed in that thick air, and were akin to that aerial race which long preceded man as the dominant creature upon the earth's surface. We have long postulated the existence of such creatures without psychic proof. A heap of rough stones furnishes the "trace" required, and a whole world of fresh existences is discovered.

It must be explored.

First, where not to go. This aerial race was not even akin to the other predominant glorified human creatures, which more immediately preceded man. Man resembled this later race about as much as the common ant will resemble the new being, half a span in height, who will succeed man as the predominant creature on this world's crust. Mekke knows the scale of the aeri-als' work, and where to look for the traces that remain of it. It is as hard for us to attribute what they have done to anything but Nature, as it will be for the coming ant-like creatures to attribute the ruins of our ship-canals, great railway cuttings, and tunnels to anything but the workings of Nature; at the

marvels of which they will of course be lost in wonder and admiration.

The most fitted to survive among the descendants of Mekke's aerial race still exist in the bosom of the earth's atmosphere. Less dense than the most rarefied gas known to physicists, they are all-powerful on their own plane, and not altogether powerless on ours. Mekke asserts that the weaker among them are to be found on the southern periphery. They are curious to find what are the psychic qualities of the substrata beneath their ocean of atmosphere. He has seen what I may term psychic rays, descending from the sky when the weather has been bright, clear, and sunny, reach the sea, disturb its surface, and extract from the water various gases, and with them be drawn up again into the unbroken blue of the sky. He has seen the same "trawling" rays descend upon open land in the forests of Western Brazil, turning over the earth and mould like a snow-plough on the Pacific railway. He measured one of these trenches, and found it twelve feet deep in places, and about the same width; it extended for nearly a quarter of a mile, appearing from a distance like the work of some mighty earth-worm.

Mekke thinks he has been *en rapport* with some of these supermundane existences ; he says it is devitalising in the extreme, he is more than half dead at the conclusion of the trance. But to see the world from their point of view must be to see the whole of the face of Nature. Poor Mekke ! The whole of the face of Nature is so huge that the solar universe in its entirety is but as a few sweat drops trickling from its brow ; with an eye as large as the sun itself one could not see the face of nature. But Mekke will try ; he will kill himself in the attempt, and the effort is well worth the sacrifice it will entail.

The Actual Apparition.

HE was a real ghost, there was no mistake about that, though many people disputed it. In the matter of ghosts experience alone carries complete conviction. If those who doubt did but pass through what I suffered, they would not speak glibly of hallucinations or illusions, they would know what a ghost is like—words may fail to convey the exact impression. My experience again is remarkable in so far as I saw, heard, and felt the apparition—if one sense was deceived all were deceived. But to the story.

In 1892 I removed into a couple of cosy little rooms recommended me by a friend as being “just the thing, you know, so snug and convenient, just right for an artist, and then the landlady is so nice and good-natured.”

I took up my residence there in June, and for a few weeks went through the usual process of “settling down.” With the exception of a night-

mare or two, or that which seemed then to come under the category of such, I gradually began to feel myself at home, or as near there as one can be in the average furnished apartments.

These so-called nightmares were the forerunners of my future experiences. Vague and inexplicable, I did not at first attach any importance to them, or attribute them to any ghostly visitant; but rather to bad dreams, or perhaps over-fatigue. I did not then take account of when and how they happened; such a course, naturally, did not enter my mind, and it was some time afterward that I had occasion to classify them as it were.

It was on the night of the 30th Sept., 1892, that the apparition first took actual shape. As usual that night I went to bed not feeling the least nervous, as I had plenty of other things to occupy my mind at that time, and I was utterly unsuspecting of any harm happening on that, or any other night. It was about 11 p.m. when I extinguished my candle, and I had been asleep about two hours I suppose, when I suddenly awoke with the impression that someone else was in the room. The place, with the exception of the farthest corners, seemed to be filled with a

ghastly grey light (there was no moon that night), and in front of the window the dark figure of a man passed to the foot of the bed, and stood there regarding me.

For the moment it seemed almost familiar to me, for the figure somewhat resembled that of my father, so much so that involuntarily I gasped :

“Father, is that you?”

“I’m not your father,” was the sullen reply.

“Then who *are* you,” I asked, highly indignant at the intrusion.

“If you want to know who I am, I’m Robert,” he hissed.

I knew no one of that name, I became frightened, his expression was so maniacal, so devilish, that I was speechless with terror, but could not remove my gaze. I dared not move, I did not scream, but I am not given to screaming on any account or under any stress of fright.

The cold perspiration stood out all over me, and I lay there simply paralysed under that gaze. Then, horror of horrors! he sprang at me like a cat, and for a moment the struggle was fearful; afterwards I must have swooned, for I remember

nothing more for some minutes, or it may be longer, when I gradually perceived that the room was dark once more, and there was no apparent form visible; though I dared not think of what might be lurking in the dim corners of the room. I felt I dare not move an inch even to reach the matches, nor could I contemplate for a moment raising an alarm. Such a course would have been futile, as my rooms were cut off from the rest of the sleeping apartments. There was no more sleep for me that night. All I could do was to wait and watch for the dawn, which came at last, and with it relief.

I felt convinced that my visitant was no human being; for no human being could have got through the door of my sitting-room, which led into my bedroom, without my being instantly aware of it,—as the fastening had an unfortunate trick of snapping with a spring rather loudly, and without the least warning, no matter how carefully manipulated. The windows, too, of both sitting-room and bedroom, are unyielding, noisy in their movements; and though I kept the one in the bedroom always open at the top, yet only sufficiently wide to admit a free current of fresh air, certainly not

wide enough to admit any intruder choosing to come in that way.

I could not chase the recollection of the horrid thing from my mind all that day, and I made it my business to tax my landlady with it, and get her to account for it in a reasonable way. I asked her first, whether she knew of anything out of the ordinary that might have happened in the rooms before I took them; or whether a death had occurred there. She seemed very much taken by surprise, and innocently curious as to my reason for asking her; in fact, her replies were most irritating in their assumption of innocence. Whether she ever really was cognizant of anything taking place there, and kept her knowledge back for pecuniary reasons of her own, I shall never learn. I only know that it was with the most guileless air imaginable that she promised to make inquiries of an old lady next door, who had lived there in the former tenant's time, and most likely knew all about it. But whatever the old lady did say was never told to me, though I repeatedly made inquiries.

I for my part took note of the fact that it was on the last night of the month, which struck me as

being peculiar, as on the last night of the preceding month I remembered I had had a curious experience during the night, the precise nature of which I could never arrive at satisfactorily. It seemed to me a curious jumble of dream and reality, and a sense of being pummelled to a pulp. I put this experience down to a nightmare, as I could not account for it in any other way, though I had partaken of nothing that evening at supper to cause indigestion. In short, I tried in vain to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, and to reduce the unusual experience to a natural cause, but did not succeed in so doing.

The month went quickly by; I had much to think of; life is made up of a multitude of little things, and the trivialities often fully occupy our thoughts; but at that time I was contemplating a change of importance, and what to do in the circumstances pressing upon me required so much thought and attention, that the experience of the last night in the month faded into insignificance; so much so, that the last day of the month again arrived without so much as a thought on my part that it was the last day. I therefore retired that night as inapprehensive as one could wish, full of

my little troubles, and utterly oblivious to nervous fear.

I had not been asleep two hours before I felt a horrible pressure from behind (I was lying on my right side), and two long, cold, clammy hands were gradually insinuated beneath my arms. I felt instinctively that they were "Robert's," and, cold with fright, almost paralysed by the strength of his grip, I held them tight as in a vice; whereupon they were removed and immediately held in front of my face, on a level with my eyes, each finger moving as though vindicating their release from my pressure; and in my determination to hurt them if I possibly could, and thereby rid myself of his presence once and for all, *I took the little finger of the hand nearest me to pinch it with a spiteful pinch*, when it again eluded my grasp and vanished, together with the hands themselves.

Trembling at what I had had the temerity to do, I sank back on my pillow, moved not a limb for very fear, and waited for morning.

I asked myself again and again, What did it all mean? Was I to be haunted in this way all the time I remained in these rooms, tormented by a

thing so uncanny as this "Robert," as he called himself? Why I had never in my life before come across, or had any dealings with, any person of the name of Robert, and certainly after this experience I never wished to. I resolved that as soon as possible I would seek fresh apartments, and until they were found I would sleep *anywhere* but in that room on all future "last nights." After this, therefore, at the end of every month, I slept at the houses of friends who, while appearing to sympathise most warmly with me, laughed undisguisedly at my contention that Robert was a real ghost.

I have long since removed from the apartments, and the only facts I have been able to gather concerning its previous tenants were obtained for me by the wife of a medical man long resident in the neighbourhood. "Robert" was the son (or brother, I forget which), then dead, of the family who formerly lived in the house where I lodged. He was known to be wrong in the head, and some time before his death had to be placed under restraint and labelled "dangerous." Moreover, his apartments in the house were those which I occupied. I was never able to find out any

reason for his appearance on the last nights only. I have not seen him or his apparition once since I left the house, nor do I wish to.

This is a plain statement of the actual facts in nothing elaborated, and the drawing I have made is a faithful presentment of what I saw.

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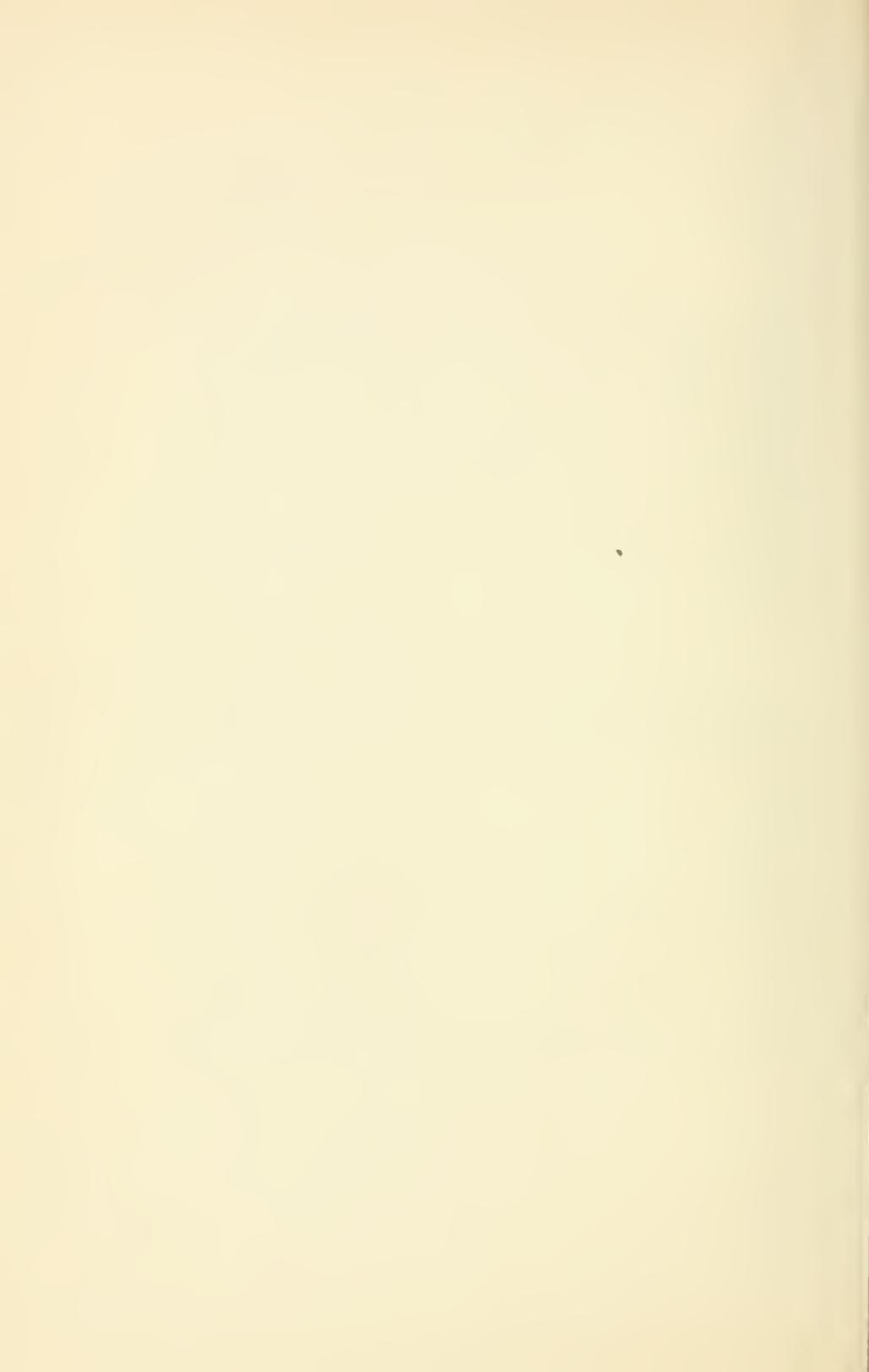
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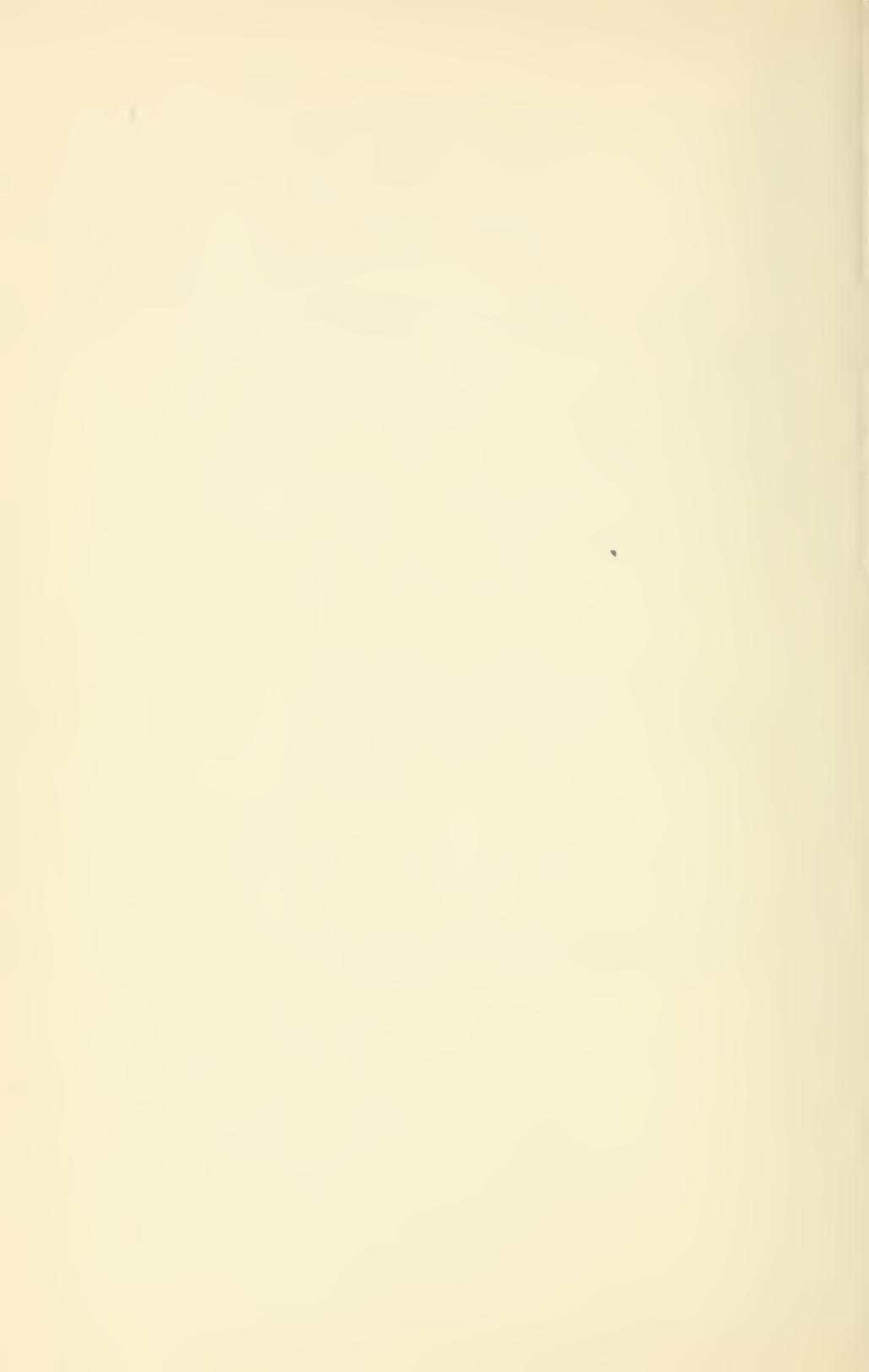
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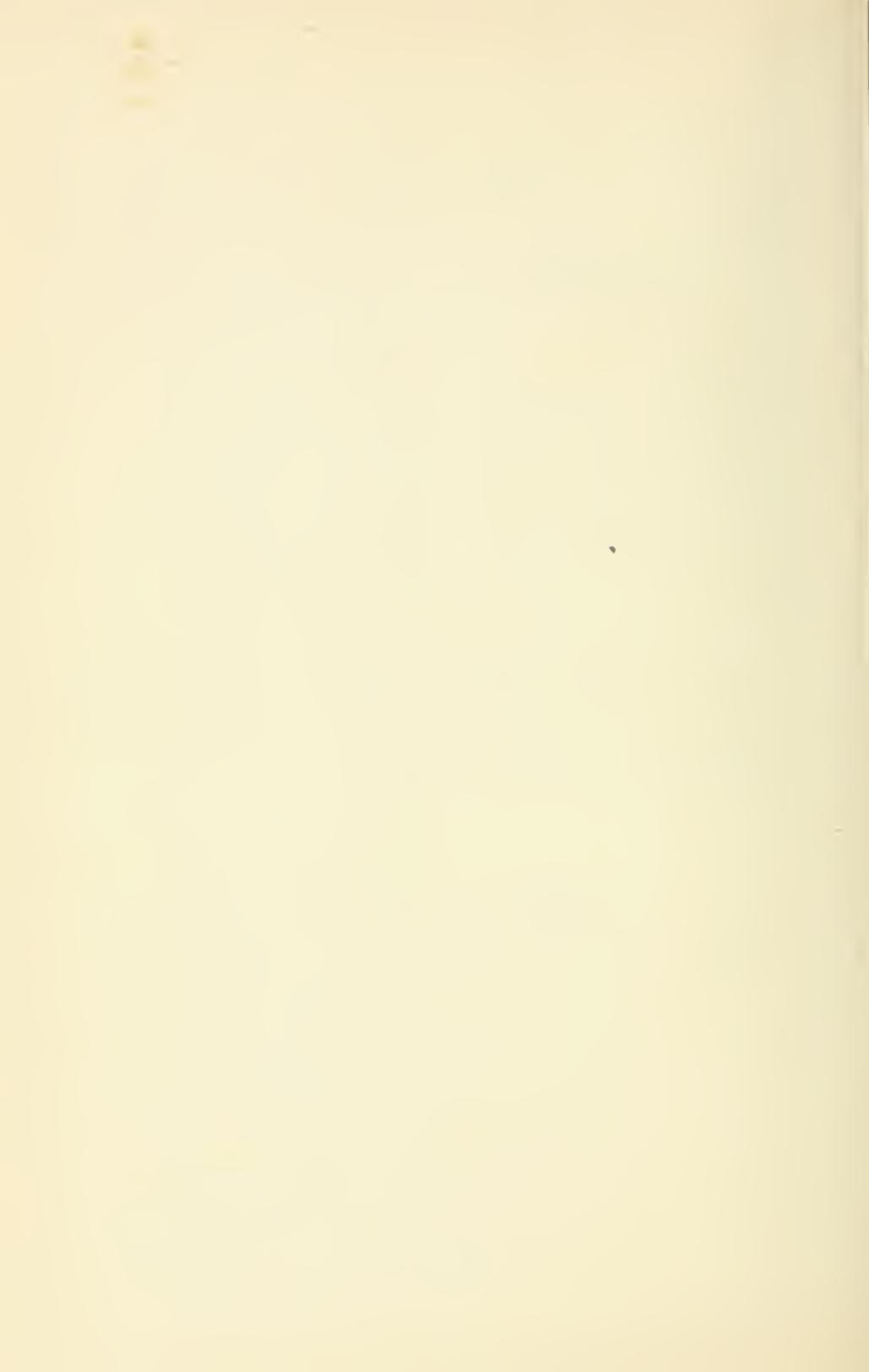
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